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GOLDMINE

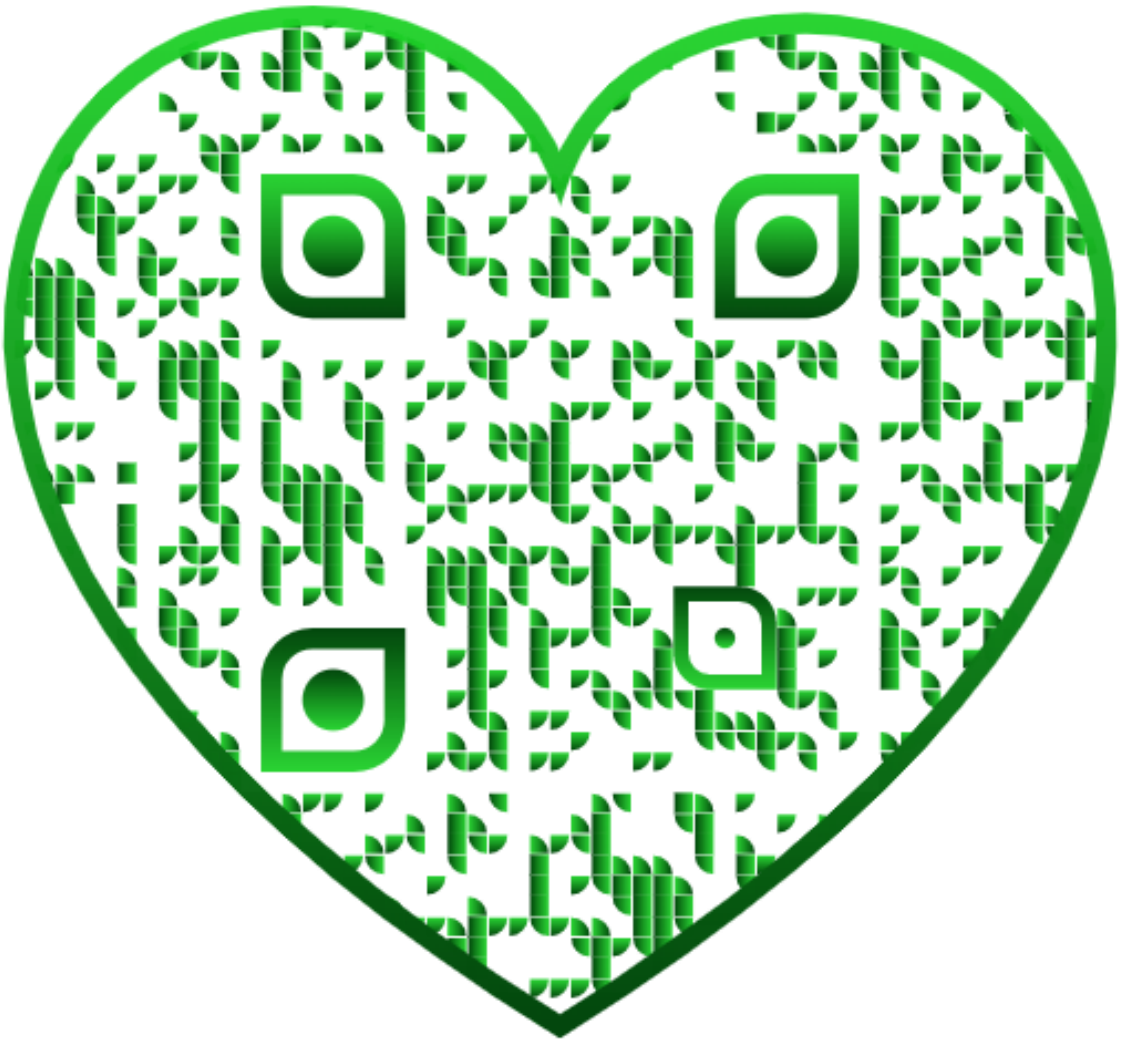
THE MUSIC COLLECTOR'S MAGAZINE

GOLDMINEMAG.COM SUMMER 2024

BOB GRUEN

A rock photographer's rise to legendary status, taking iconic photos of **John Lennon** and others.

SUMMER › 2024 ISSUE 949



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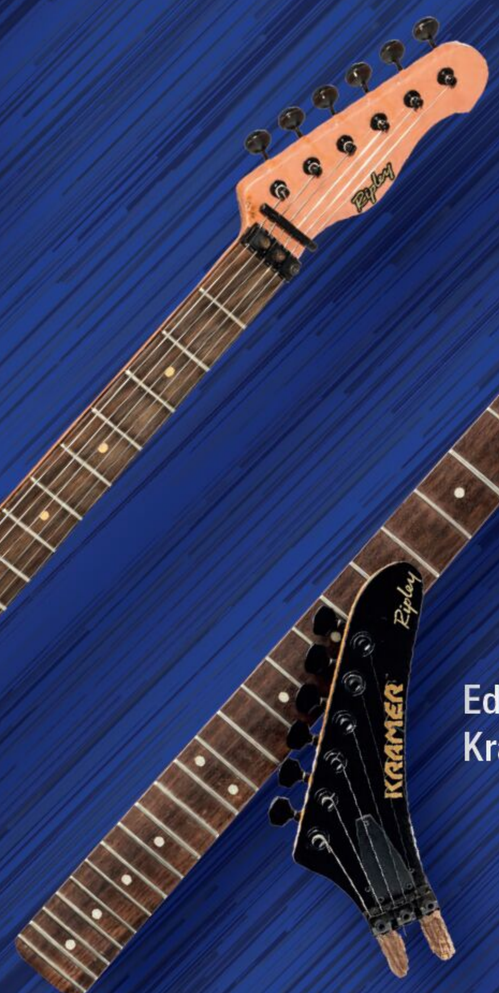

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CONTENTS

> **Have camera will travel, and I did like to travel.**
>
> — PHOTOGRAPHER BOB GRUEN ON HIS WILLINGNESS TO TRAVEL WITH A MUSIC ARTIST ANYWHERE

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

76

PHOTOGRAPHER BOB GRUEN HAS AN EYE FOR CAPTURING ICONIC MOMENTS

CONTENTS

> **Talking with Melanie one time, she mentioned that she'd never had a 'proper' bootleg.**
>
> — AUTHOR/MANAGER DAVE THOMPSON

GAB ARCHIVE/REDFERNS

72 THERE IS A WHOLE LOT OF MELANIE MATERIAL COMING OUT SOON

22 GUITARIST SLASH TURNS TO THE HEART OF THE BLUES

30 AEROSMITH'S JOE PERRY LETS THE MUSIC DO THE TALKING

36 BLACK SABBATH'S GEEZER BUTLER LEAPS *INTO THE VOID*

44 DEEP PURPLE FIGURES OUT A MUSICAL EQUATION

56 THE *FINYL VINYL* OF BLUES ROCKERS CANNED HEAT

88 JOHN LENNON'S *MIND GAMES* GETS THE EXPANDED TREATMENT

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EDITOR'S NOTE

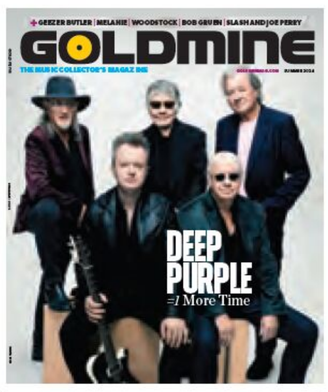
PHOTOGRAPHER BOB GRUEN has become as iconic as the photographs he has taken of rock and roll royalty. For instance, who hasn't seen the John Lennon photograph of the Beatle wearing a "New York City" T-shirt? You can hardly go into any tourist trap in Times Square without seeing a knockoff of that famous NYC T-shirt on sale.

Contributor Ivor Levene has become quite gifted at interviewing and profiling rock photographers for *Goldmine* over the past few years (Henry Diltz, Neal Preston, Frank Stefanko), and he continues this gift with Gruen in this issue. Levene, of course, is a photographer himself, so he gets Gruen to open up about his own experience of being on the "set" of famous photo shoots, the thought process of taking the right picture and the photographer's relationship with the subjects, especially Lennon.

For the Summer 2024 issue we created a Gruen/Lennon collector's edition — with an alternate cover, a slipcase and a ready-to-frame 8"x10" of the photographer's images of the legendary Liverpudlian living in America.

Besides the limited-edition Gruen/Lennon bundle, there will be a collector's edition for Black Sabbath's **Geezer Butler** with a signed photo, and an awesome tribute bundle to **Melanie** on Woodstock's 55th anniversary. The latter comes with a very limited (only 100 pressed) turquoise 7-inch (33 rpm) of two songs ("Close to It All" and "Momma Momma") from the singer-songwriter's digital-only replaying of her setlist at Woodstock in 1969 titled *Songs I Sang at Woodstock*. The acoustic replaying of these songs has never been pressed on vinyl before, so it's a treat for music enthusiasts. The Summer 2024 bundles will be available at *Shop.GoldmineMag.com* along with the regular issues shown at right. Enjoy!

— **Patrick Prince**, *Editor*



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- **Record Store Recon** visits a record store every print issue; afterward the anonymous Dr. Disc talks about it in more detail on a podcast episode.

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GOLDMINE

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SPIN CYCLE

TRIED-AND-TRUE ARTISTS

BY DAVE THOMPSON

The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars may not have been **David Bowie**'s all-round greatest album. But it was certainly his most important — the LP that broke him out of eight years of struggling to make a lasting mark; the one that confirmed him among the most visionary songwriters of the age; the one, quite simply, that established him as a superstar.

But it was also, in terms of gestation, one of his most drawn-out, and in some ways, his most confused. It is now common knowledge, thanks to the Record Store Day release of *Waiting in the Sky (Before the Starman Came to Earth)*, that Bowie's initial vision for the album was very different in tone to the finished item, even with many of the songs already in place.

It was also something of a gathering of homeless odds and ends. "Moonage Daydream: and "Hang On to Yourself" had both previously seen release as 45s under the Arnold Corns pseudonym, albeit in radically different form; "It Ain't Easy" was an outtake from the preceding *Hunky Dory*; "Suffragette City," according to some sources, might easily have become a Mott the Hoople single; and so forth.

But it worked, and the latest in Parlophone's series of super-*duper*-deluxe album releases is a step-by-step study of just how the masterpiece was forged.

Rock'n'Roll Star! is an immaculately packaged five CDs-plus-Blu ray box that reaches back to early 1971 in search of the demos and doodles that would become *Ziggy Stardust*.

It reminds us that, long before the recording sessions began in earnest, Bowie was already squirreling away songs and notions; a rudimentary "Moonage Daydream" recorded on his American promo tour in February 1971; a sparse "Lady Stardust": demoed the following month; further demos for "Star" and "Ziggy Stardust" itself; the Arnold Corns sessions of course; rehearsals from the very eve of the band's return to the studio. And that's just disc one.

Fast forward to the final disc, and the outtakes pour like rain — alternative versions of the familiar album tracks, unheard takes of the outtakes that we've met on previous releases, and a couple that we had never heard, or even heard of, before. There's another "Lady Stardust," sounding this time as though Bowie is channeling the spirit of his 1967 Deram album; a wonderful take on "John, I'm Only Dancing" and, closing the set with almost cliff-hanging delight, a version of the Who's "I Can't Explain," recorded a full 15 months before Bowie readdressed it for *Pin Ups*.

These two discs alone rank among the most significant Bowie CDs we've seen across a decade of box sets and reissues, and had they been released as a standalone double set, nobody would have complained. But wait — there's more.

Across two further CDs, a full accounting of Bowie's BBC session recordings throughout 1972 might reprise material that we've already been sold in the past but adds those that only the bootlegs had hitherto offered. And disc four sweeps

COURTESY OF RHINO RECORDS/PARLOPHONE

up whatever's left over—single mixes of "Starman" and "John, I'm Only Dancing"; those aforementioned outtakes that had made it out on other releases, and five tracks from Bowie's Boston Music Hall concert in October 1972, four of which had previously seen release in Rykodisc's *Sound + Vision* box set, albeit in a video CD format that a lot of collectors cannot even play anymore.

That's how complete *Rock'n'Roll Star!* is, and still there's more — the Blu-ray includes both the original 1972 Ziggy album, the 2003 5.1 mix and the RSD album, plus there's a hefty book of track details, interviews and period press, *plus* a reproduction of one of Bowie's period notebooks.

Which all adds up to ... Spin Cycle has never made a secret of its love of Bowie's music. having collected his records for over 50 years, denial seems futile even in the face of the lousy ones. But this is, beyond doubt, *the* most significant, and enjoyable, archive release Bowie's catalog has ever seen, and a benchmark that is going to be hard for any future collection to top. And why? Because *Ziggy* itself was unbeatable, and *Rock'n'Roll Star!* shows us why. Do you remember when *Goldmine* used to rank new albums on a five-star system? This box receives 36.

OK, moving on. 2023's 50th anniversary revisit to **Robin Trower**'s *Twice Removed from Yesterday* debut was one of the key reissues of the year. Now, a similar set dedicated to its follow-up, *Bridge of Sighs* (Chrysalis), goes one better. It's one of the key reissues of the decade so far.

It was a remarkable album from the outset. Countless artists have debuted with a first LP that can be ranked among the greatest first of all time. Following through with a second of equal quality, however, is a lot harder. But Trower did it, and arguably, he never hit such dramatic heights again.

This isn't the place to discuss the whys and wherefores of that, although the departure of drummer Reg Isidore probably played a part in it — there was a singular alchemy that bordered upon the magical about the interplay between the three instrumentalists who powered those first two albums, and subsequent lineups never recaptured that. It's as simple as that.

There are two incarnations of the anniversary edition. On CD, three discs offer up the original album, a remix built around the original (edited) session recordings, a Record Plant live show and half a dozen outtakes (plus a Blu-ray of highlights). On vinyl, two discs zero in on the most important elements of that.

The unedited mix devours sides one and two — which is strange because, back in 1974, the whole reason for trimming it was so it could fit on two sides of vinyl. For the most part, these cuts are minimal. "Day of the Eagle" lost 30-some seconds, the title track shed 27. But other tracks gain upwards of a minute, and the closing "Little Bit of Sympathy" gains almost two. Across the board, the album seems fuller, more expansive, more powerful, more ... everything.

Shift to side three, and a "typical" Trower live set of the age rips out of the speakers, and in itself rates among the most exhilarating recordings in the Trower catalog. The liners, built around interviews with Trower, producer Matthew Fisher, engineer Geoff Emerick, are thorough and illuminating; and the packaging itself is ace. If you've heard this album (and its predecessor), you know you need this reissue. If you haven't ... you should.

Let's jump now 30 years on from there, to a world in which **Garbage** — the scintillating combination of Butch Vig, Shirley Manson, Steve Marker and Duke Erikson — have just scored their biggest hit yet, a Top 5 placing for the album *Bleed Like Me*. And then leap 20 years more to today, where that album has been reissued across four essential sides of wax (Stun Volume/BMG).

That's two sides of the album proper, and two more of collector friendly B-sides and such, and from beginning to end,

Bleed Like Me remains startling; anomalous when compared to much else that was passing for "alternative" music at that time; and all the more compulsive because of that.

In terms of coherence, the album sides are, of course, the vital listen; the others, however, are as entertaining as they are occasionally unhinged. Furthermore, when lined up alongside its predecessors, *Bleed Like Me* vividly illustrates a band that has still to reach the pinnacle of its creativity; is still driving forward. And that despite having effectively disbanded two years earlier, only to reunite to clear up some unfinished musical business. Then they disappeared again, and it would be seven years more before they cut a fifth album. By which time the momentum had ceased.

Here, however, Garbage remain the personification of all that was great about the immediate post-Nirvana rock scene, and they continued getting greater for 10 more years. And don't you let anyone tell you otherwise.

Finally this month, an archive release that makes even the unknown outtakes on the Bowie box feel like the pinnacle of mass-consumption, a five track 12-inch EP comprising the first ever demo tape recorded by **The Adverts** — the band, of course, that brought TV Smith to the fore, and which remains, to this day, the freshest sounding of all the first wave U.K. punk bands.

Drawn from a cassette that had lain perhaps unplayed since being sent to Chiswick Records at the end of 1976, *Rehearsal Tape* (In The Red/2.13.61) is the sound of the band at its rawest, powering nonetheless through some of the most defiant numbers of that entire era — the compulsive "One Chord Wonders" (destined to become their debut single), the anthemic "Bored Teenagers," "New Boys," "Quickstep" and "We Who Wait."

Exquisitely remastered far beyond its humble origins, *Rehearsal Tape* is a direct transport back to the very moment when punk left the underground clubs and became a national scandal.

It is the sound of the Roxy Club with a decent sound system, it is the tension of a firestorm about to break. But most of all, it is the first declaration of a group destined to become one of the most crucial acts of their entire age. Don't let it pass you by.

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Owner Paul Ruffins is an amazing owner, and a pretty nice guy. This store had five different people working while I was there and they are always willing to help find what you are looking for. No pretentious staff at this store — but I will stay away from Debbie Gibson.

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You will find every genre of music that you are looking for. They specialize in pop, rock, jazz, R&B, soul, and they had a small (but good) selection of punk. They also have a good selection of Record Store Day items, but expect to find a big line on RSD and RSD Black Friday.

SPECIAL MENTION

Rattleback was nice enough to host The Drowns to a day of shopping at the store, and the band had an amazing time. The members of the band each found some gems that they had been looking for. Rumor has it *Goldmine* will be back at this store with more bands to take shopping.

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10 ALBUMS THAT CHANGED MY LIFE

DAN LORENZO

For five decades Dan Lorenzo has made New Jersey proud. He can easily be considered one of the state's musical stalwarts. The guitarist began playing heavy metal in the genre's infancy, certainly ahead of the curve in the U.S., forming the power metal band Hades (1978) and eventually the progressively doomy outfit Non-Fiction (1989). Since then he has collaborated with artists across genres, from Overkill vocalist Bobby Ellsworth (with the magnificent but short-lived hard rock group The Cursed and their one album, *Room Full of Sinners*) to DMC (Darryl McDaniels from Run-DMC), who asked Lorenzo to write music to his drum beats on a song called "teRIFFic," where McDaniels raps "Dan Lorenzo on guitar, coming on like Black Sabbath."

Currently, Lorenzo is excited about his latest music project with Type O Negative drummer Johnny Kelly called Patriarchs in Black. PiB are doom/stoner rock of the highest order, with a brand new album titled *Visioning*.

If you aren't familiar with Lorenzo's music résumé, you should check into it! In the meantime, here are the 10 albums that changed his life.

— Patrick Prince

COURTESY OF DAN LORENZO

Kiss, Rock and Roll Over
I heard this album at my buddy's house, and the next day I called him. "Hey, what's the name of that Kiss greatest hits album you played me yesterday?" I was informed that it wasn't a greatest hits album. Dear God. Could one band write and perform that many perfect songs on one album? Life changing.

Kiss, Alive!
Oh my God! They did it again? Actually, this double album preceded *Rock and Roll Over*. What's that funny cigarette that dude is holding on the back cover? How was this band playing in front of so many people and I never heard of them? Probably because before Kiss, my album collection consisted of three albums: *Frampton Comes Alive!*, *Olé ELO* and *Chicago's Greatest Hits*.

Aerosmith, Rocks
Another perfect album from another Northeast American band. So bad ass. I can still listen to this album on a regular basis. Joe Perry wearing the fedora inside the album? Man, I wish I could look that cool and it was easier than putting on makeup. "Nobody's Fault." Just ... wow.

Cheap Trick, Cheap Trick
A little different than Kiss or Aerosmith, but check out "Cry, Cry." Almost doom! And I needed to learn that bassline immediately even though I'm a guitar player.

AC/DC, Highway To Hell
I distinctly remember playing along with this album when I was in the 11th grade. I would play along from beginning to end, but my guitar sounded a little out of tune. Years later I realized that most of the songs are tuned slightly different from each other. Brilliant move ... on purpose or accident?

Exodus, Bonded By Blood
By the time *Bonded* came out, Kiss were losing their way. I was still into Judas Priest, but the thrash movement was *really* getting interesting. Scott LePage (who played on Hades' *Resisting Success* and whose son is in Polyphia) and I went to L'Amour to see Exodus. We were told that singer Paul Baloff "wasn't feeling well." So Exodus performed In front of 2,000 rabid fans with no vocalist. It didn't matter. We all sang the lyrics and a bloody great time was had by all.

Ice Cube, Death Certificate
When Hades had broken up after our 1989 European tour I was crushed. I was already getting into NWA and The Beastie Boys, but in 1991 Ice Cube really delivered. "A Bird in the Hand." "Givin' Up the Nappy Dug Out." Heavy and brilliant lyrically.

The Black Crowes, The Southern Harmony And Musical Companion
A little different for me. I love this album. Unfortunately, I don't think I'd look good in bell bottoms, but man ... this album rules!

Dr Dre, 2001
I know everybody loved *The Chronic* ... not me! But I can listen to *2001* all day. My metalhead fans may be disappointed to learn that when I'm alone in my car I listen to probably 60 percent hip-hop. I think it might make my metal riffs a little groovier than your normal white boy who listens to nothing but hard rock/metal.

Plasmatics, Coup De Grace
Perfect album, and the most terrifying exhilarating concert I'd been to. So many bombs going off I had my first panic attack and briefly had to leave the club because I thought was going to choke to death.

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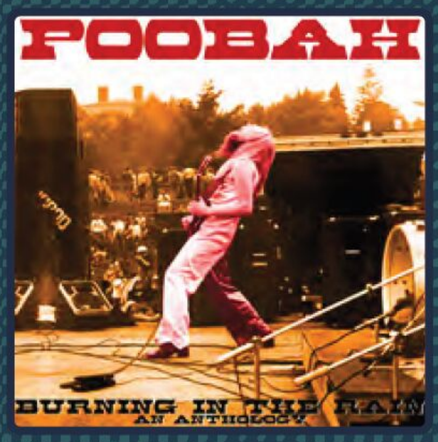

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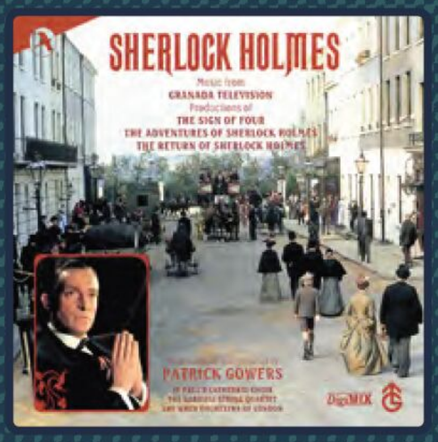

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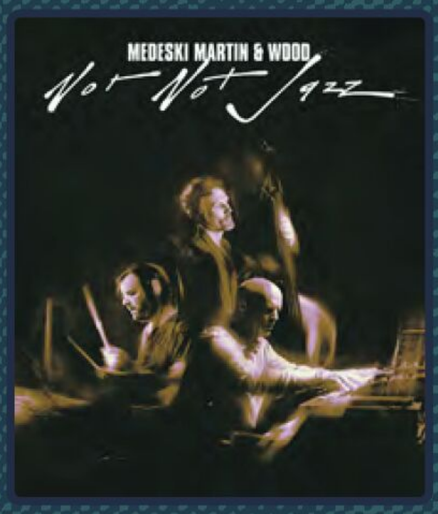

MEDESKI, MARTIN & WOOD

NOT NOT JAZZ

An in-depth look at the unique and wholly improvisational creative process of the revolutionary "avant-groove" band Medeski, Martin and Wood.

BLU-RAY AND DVD

RICHARD RODGERS & OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN

MY FAVORITE THINGS: THE RODGERS & HAMMERSTEIN 80TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT

Celebrate 80 years of Rodgers & Hammerstein with this landmark concert filmed at Theatre Royal Drury Lane.

BLU-RAY AND DVD

MVDaudio
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ALBUM COVER ARTWORK

NONESUCH RECORDS — BY DESIGN

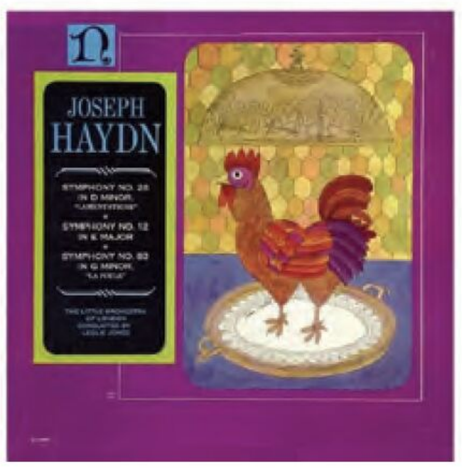
BY CHRISTOPHER BUDD

If the span of your musical tastes is wide enough to encompass Baroque concertos, flamenco and electronica (and frankly why not?), you may be familiar with the highly collectible 1960s output of New York's **Nonesuch Records**. But were you to start amassing your own favorites from the hundreds of LPs the label released during its formative years, you'd also be indirectly curating a library of work by just about everyone who was anyone in album art illustration during that fertile and tumultuous period.

Conceived in 1964 by Elektra records founder Jac Holzman as his answer to the ubiquity of budget paperback books, Nonesuch presented "adventurous repertoire for music lovers with more taste than money" — hip young people — licensed from various classical and early music labels across Europe and sold at half the cost of a new LP. With such a varied catalog, a strong visual identity for the label would be vitally important, and Elektra Art Director William Harvey immediately began overseeing the work of turning these disparate recordings into a unified brand. Harvey's approach was to make Nonesuch humorous and friendly, and he brought in artists who could do just that — including some who would become big names. Although we can only scratch the surface of an enormous body of work here, much of it deserves a closer look.

In the spirit of approachable, light-hearted designs, Abe Gurvin — today most famous for his influential *Nuggets* artwork — created an eye-catchingly cheerful collage for a set of C.P.E. Bach symphonies [H-71180], as well as preparing his acid bright colors for a Schoenberg/Webern/Stravinsky serialist set [H-71192] and a Bach harpsichord suite [H-71176], before capturing the gilded spirit of early music festivities for 1970's *A Nonesuch Christmas* [H-71232]. Gurvin's portfolio would later include work for Gene Pitney, The Mothers and Mort Garson's *Cosmic Sounds* — on Elektra this time.

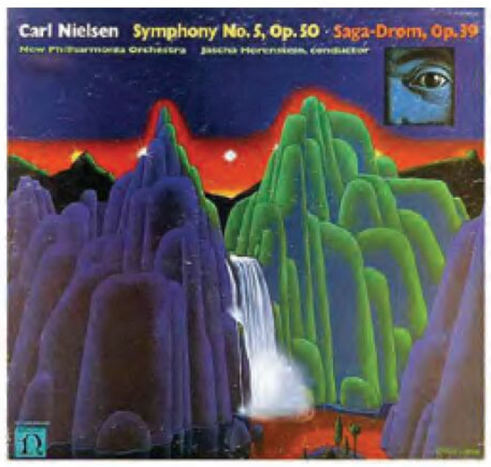
Bob Pepper, who would paint Love's *Forever Changes* in '67, drew a large batch for Nonesuch prior to that, including a beautiful rendition for a De Falla concerto that looks like a James Bond paperback [H-1135], and an arresting prepsychedelic design for a Mendelssohn concerto that makes great use of wildly contrasting colors [H-1099].



From New York design studio Push Pin, Isadore Seltzer produced a small handful of Nonesuch covers in his distinctively modern style with geometric elements [H-1058], [H-1061]. His work would be familiar to readers of *Sesame Street Magazine* in the early '70s, as well as — perhaps somewhat incongruously — gracing the cover of Bruce Haack's *The Electric Lucifer*. Seltzer's Push Pin colleague, caricaturist Edward Sorel provided a set of more straightforward sleeves utilizing his particular skills, perhaps most notably for André Benichou's *Jazz Guitar Bach* [H-1069].

Another illustrator with *Sesame Street Magazine* credits (clearly Big Bird was the employer of choice at the turn of the decade) as well as numerous books, posters, and advertisements, was John Trotta. His couple-of-dozen sleeves for Nonesuch tell the label's early genre-bending story in a nutshell, featuring designs for Flamenco [H-2002] and Koto [H-2005]; a somewhat on-the-nose Haydn illustration [H-1083]; and a dainty Renaissance choir [H-1084] among many others.

Trotta's contemporary Donald Leake has a similar style, if perhaps a touch heavier in its execution. He produced possibly the largest number of sleeves for Nonesuch in their early days, including the label's inaugural Indian classical music disc [H-2003] and others in the nascent International Series [H-2008, H-2011]. Some of his most



imaginative and energetic designs could be straight out of Pepperland [H-1081, H-1143] while others push the envelope with their intricacy of detail [H-1116] and even dispense with the label's convention of laying the artwork out within a solid colored frame [HC-3004]. Leake would continue working for the label into the '70s, his *The Soul of Mbira* [H-72054] sleeve being just one highlight among many.

After a slow start, Nonesuch was at one point bringing in 55% of Elektra's revenue, "the tail wagging the Elektra dog," as Keith Holzman put it. "One of the keys to the Nonesuch success has been the cover art" explained a 1965 *Billboard* piece. "[Jac] Holzman insists that all artwork be commissioned, that it represent the period rather than the abstract, that it have striking color, and that it have a light touch." That same year Teresa Sterne, ex-Vanguard Records, was appointed to head up the label, remaining Director until 1979 — the first woman to hold such a senior role at a major record label in the U.S. She introduced the Explorer series, adding new recordings of American folk music, world music and eventually experimental and electronic music to Nonesuch's catalog.

Post-Love, Bob Pepper would paint The Westland Steel Band's *The Sound of the Sun* [H-2016] in recognizable style; a frankly demented-looking Mahler symphony [H-71240]; a powerfully frozen moment for Morton Subotnick's *The Wild Bull* [H-71208]; and perhaps most notably the world music landmark *Nonesuch Explorer* [H7-11], by which point the non-established label had left the early stylistic grid behind for good and were giving the full 12-inch square to designers.

Roger Hane however, better known for his paperback covers, had been breaking the Nonesuch grid as early as '66 with his bold *Fidelio* [HB-3005]. His 1969 artwork for Carl Nielsen's *Symphony No.5 Op.50* [H-71236] is beautifully prog presaging, reframing the Danish composer as a psychedelic dreamer.

With the label's widening remit, and a huge catalog, there were opportunities galore for illustrators. In the later part of his career, William Hoffman painted jazz covers for

Savoy, but in his earlier work for Nonesuch he seems to have been given the modernists [H-1155, H-71186, H-71212], and his colorful, flamboyant style works wonders to illustrate their angular, off-kilter sounds — a task that other labels often struggled with.

In the same period, Frank Bozzo only made a handful for Nonesuch, but his bold design for Schubert's *Die Schöne Müllerin* [H-71211] is a highlight, and he clearly enjoyed himself with a superbly intricate depiction of Andrew Rudin's *Tragoedia* [H-71198].

And while color is obviously important in this era — Gordon Kibbee's sleeve for *The Art of the Baroque Trumpet* [H-71217] being a particular day-glo treat for the eyes — some artists were bold enough to take a different approach. Bob Ziering's conspicuously washed-out palette and sinuous forms decorate a number of "serious" and religious-themed sleeves in the latter part of the decade [H-71190, HD-73021, H-71216].

Elaine Gongora receives several credits for design from '68 on (although not always for artwork as well). Her standout piece is her beautiful cover for Kenneth Gaburo's *Music For Voices, Instruments & Electronic Sounds* [H-71199], but her delicate work on the Explorer series [H-72018, H-72019 *et al*] helped to create an identity for that important sub-brand. Gongora also worked more widely for Elektra, on sleeves for The Incredible String Band and others.

Visual artist Anthony Martin only designed one cover for Nonesuch, but it was early electronicist Morton Subotnick's hugely influential *Silver Apples of the Moon*, depicted with a swirling spacescape [H-71174]. The label's most important release of this period however is arguably Beaver & Krause's near legendary *The Nonesuch Guide to Electronic Music* [HC-73018]. Gene Szafran produced just a handful of characteristically stylish sleeves for Nonesuch (alongside work for The Holy Modal Rounders, The Paul Butterfield Blues Band, and others), but his illustration made to accompany Paul [Beaver] and Bernie [Krause] putting their brand-new Moog through its paces somehow resembles, with some prescience, the output of a smartphone having a breakdown. Perhaps it breaks Nonesuch's "no abstracts" rule, but in such style.

Seven years after the label's inception, Jac Holzman recalled mounting a traveling art show of the label's artwork, which toured U.S. colleges to great acclaim. And rightly so. Nonesuch had introduced young record-buyers in the U.S. to centuries of music they may never have listened to, to music from all over the world, and to new music being made right here at home, all without ever really denting their pockets. The packaging of the discs had been such an important factor in making the music accessible, desirable, and collectable, and it remains a unique time capsule of changing visual styles in illustration during this period.

In fact Nonesuch's legacy may be that in a sea of classical music LPs wrapped in boring reproductions of old masters, or early electronica being unimaginatively represented by quasi-psychedelic geometric patterns, they took these hard-to-illustrate genres and gave them a real identity — and a new audience. Although the look is very much of its time, it breathed new life into the depiction of orchestral music in particular — one need only look at the beautiful sleeves Robert Haberfield painted and collaged for La Voix De Son Maître in the late '60s and early '70s, for example, to see how the trend for fresh, eye-catching and most of all *modern* images on classical discs really caught on — at least for a while.

Now 60 years on from the label's inception, Nonesuch remains a contemporary force with much the same ethos it always had — world and American roots music nestles up happily alongside Wilko, The Black Keys, Philip Glass and Emmylou Harris. A spread of 60th Anniversary events are planned so keep an eye on *www.nonesuch.com*.

COLLECTOR'S RESOURCES

ENCAPSULATING VINYL
THE NEXT BIG THING?

BY ANDREW DALY

For vinyl collectors — and collectors of anything, really — functionality has long been at odds with the fear of self-inflicted destruction. After all, we love these fetishized pieces of history. And we often pay big bucks for them, meaning we want them around for the long haul.

But then again, when it comes to vinyl records, we want to play them. We collect vinyl because we love the tactile experience of laying a slab of wax on a turntable. It's singular to vinyl, and really, no other form of music listening experience can offer it.

And so, what would you say about a service that "provides preservation, archiving, display, grading, authentication, and other services to collectors, buyers, and sellers of audio media products?" That's a lot to take in. In laypeople's terms, said service, **Jeremy Downs' Audio Media Grading (AMG)**, takes your precious wax, grades it and encapsulates it for preservation, as in no more playing said wax.

The debate of whether one should or should not play one's records, or seal them forever will surely rage on forever, as will the even more profound discussion about what deserves such red-carpet services. It's interesting stuff—so interesting, in fact, that *Goldmine* dialed in with CEO Jeremy Downs to learn the ins and outs of his service, how it differs from *Goldmine's* 50-year-strong grading system, and what it means for the collecting community as we move ahead.

GOLDMINE: *What can you tell me about the process of what Audio Media Grading does?*

JEREMY DOWNS: You bet! We're the premier destination for authenticating grading and encapsulating all forms of music. We offer our services for vinyl records, cassettes, CDs and 8-tracks. You start a submission online at audiomediagrading.com and tell us a little bit about the piece that you would like graded.

GM: *So, it's user-initiated. From there, how does it go?*

JD: Right, so you fill out the form and send us the item. Then, when we start the process, the first step is to authenticate the item. A lot of expertise goes into that, and this won't surprise you or the readers, but we look at if it's a vinyl record and try to verify the pressing.

GM: *That's got to be quite a process in and of itself.*

JD: Obviously, a lot of variability goes into each of these skews. We authenticate the item, but there's also a process for grading an open piece of music and a sealed piece of music. So, if you send us something in a shrink wrap, we can verify that the shrink wrap is actually the right kind of, you know, what you would have seen in the '70s or '80s, or if it's been rewrapped.

All that goes into the authentication process. Then, we grade the item, and again, if it's wrapped or sealed, we're just looking at the external product, like what the corners look like and things of that nature. If it's unsealed, then we're looking at the physical media for scratches on the vinyl, etc. And then we encapsulate it. We have sonic weld cases that preserve the media and protect it. After that, we package it and ship it back to the customer.

GM: *It's an interesting process, and surely one you know will only appeal to a subset of collectors.*

JD: Absolutely. Look, we get that, you know, so the way I would sort of respond to that is twofold. First, with grading, if you look at just about any other collectible, vertical grading has been at the core of collecting now, right? If you look at sports cards, comics, or coins, pick your thing; vertical grading is well-accepted.

GM: *But that's not the case in music today.*

JD: Yes, and we understand that. We understand that we're introducing this, that it's a new experience for a lot of collectors, and it's not for everybody. People buying these pieces ultimately listen to them regularly; you can't do that if you're going to grade it and encapsulate it. It's not for every collector, but look, we do know that some interesting trends are happening.

One, if you look at vinyl, specifically, more than 50% of the people who are buying vinyl records today don't have a player; they don't have a turntable. And so, we do think that, for those collectors, it really is part of their identity; it's something that they want to put away, store, and be able to look back at in 10 or 20 years and say, "Hey, this was part of me. This was part of my identity when I was a teenager."

Being able to preserve and protect those pieces is important. And then, even for those who do have the desire to listen to some of these pieces, we believe that they're going to have some that are so rare that they don't want to listen to it, and they'll have another copy that is the is the one that they enjoy.

GM: *So, this service would not be for the collector who says, "Records are meant to be played."*

JD: Yes, those would probably be the late adopters of our service. But look, I think over time, even those folks may come around or realize and say, "Gosh, maybe I have two copies." Or even if they do only have a single copy, maybe they say, "Maybe it does make sense to preserve a handful of these."

GM: *Can you see both sides of the argument between playing and preserving?*

JD: Absolutely. I see both sides. And trust me, I'm not gonna fight or argue with somebody squarely in the camp of, "This music deserves to be played." I believe that as well. And ultimately, I'm going to have multiple copies of these of these items, some to be played, and some not to be played. I fully understand that there are going to be people in that camp and absolutely support that collecting style as well.

GM: *And obviously, certain records, like a Beatles Butcher Cover, lend themselves to your service above, say, the latest record by Billie Eilish. What's your baseline between what should or should not be encapsulated, with the caveat that it's all subjective anyway?*

JD: I do think that we should be thinking about encapsulating more and more of the very rare and older pieces. Again, look at the sports card market as an example. The preservation of some of these really historic cards is important for the hobby, right?

If one of these Mickey Mantle rookie cards suddenly gets water-damaged, there are only so many left. It would be a tragedy not to have that preserved and protected. So, the starting point is the really rare, old pieces; let's take care of those. But even when you get into the modern Billie Eilish stuff, like, yeah, sure, a lot of that's meant to be played, but you see these artists come out with, well, I mean, Billie Eilish may not be the best example, right?

Billie Eilish is on a crusade against multiple versions of these albums right now. But let's pick somebody like Taylor Swift, who is producing multiple versions of her albums. Some of them are very rare, some are numbered, and some may be autographed, you know? Those types of pieces that have some scarcity to them also should be considered for encapsulation and protection.

GM: *So, at the crux of it, your process is similar to how people encapsulate and grade coins, cards, and stamps. It's as much about posterity and protecting a moment in time as anything else.*

JD: Absolutely. Correct. When I started this company, it was surprising that it wasn't more adopted within the music-collecting space. And so, yes, over time, whether it's a year, three years, or five years, you'll start to see it become more and more accepted. It's the default in the hobby or the collecting space that becomes standard for a good percentage of people's pieces. It won't be for everyone, but it will be a lot closer to the experience of collecting sports cards, for example.

GM: *Still,* Goldmine *has been grading vinyl for over 50 years. Does your process differ much from that well-loved and trusted process?*

JD: It honestly doesn't differ a ton. I would say it's sort of an extension of the *Goldmine* standard. We take in a couple more points of consideration when we're looking at these pieces so that, candidly, the experience we hope would be similar to folks who understand and trust the *Goldmine* system.

GM: *So, what are the subtle differences?*

JD: The one sort of difference is that some personal bias is removed when you have a third party doing it right. We want to have a lot of trust built into our independent grading system where when people see an AMG slab, they will understand that, yes, it's a validated, third-party, unbiased, near mint copy.

We want them to have a lot of trust and confidence in us versus if they're on, you know, pick your marketplace, and see a random dealer who you've never interacted with, who is saying it's a near-mint copy. We want a little bit more trust that goes into our label and grading process.

GM: *The returns are early, but are you seeing a lot of orders for your service?*

JD: Yeah, we're seeing a ton of orders. It's exciting, and the early adopters have jumped on it. The product market fit is fantastic; over 40% of our customers are repeat customers, so they're sending us multiple orders. And every order has about five pieces, so there's a lot of belief that this is here to stay, which we're excited about. Your audience may largely be vinyl collectors, but collectors of cassettes, CDs, and all media people are sending things to us.

GM: *What are your main goals as you move forward?*

JD: We're really focused on driving awareness of this service. What we've talked about today is that we're creating this category within the music-collecting space. For the most part, people haven't thought about grading and encapsulating pieces, so our focus is driving awareness of the overall grading process for collectors.

We'd love for it to happen at AMG, but we want to introduce grading as a thing within the hobby. And then, as we make progress, it's really investing in our operations so that our turnaround times are quick. When people submit orders, we want to tell them exactly when they'll get it back and be able to deliver on that promise.

So, the focus right now is driving awareness of media grading as an experience within music collecting and then investing in the operations to deliver a world-class customer experience.

Visit AMG at audiomediagrading.com

RECORD LABEL PROFILE

RISE OF THE REISSUE

BY TONE SCOTT

Let us take into consideration three main business models in the scope of the modern independent record company — original releases, archival music and reissues. First, it is at least intriguing that original release independents are drawing more up-and-coming and established recording artists onto their rosters than the major music companies are today. Why might that be? These labels seem to apply a much stronger emphasis on sustainability and longevity regarding the artists they host, by far. Then there are archival record labels, whose premise is sleuthing, investigating and negotiating to remaster and release lost, forgotten and/or shelved archaic recordings that have never been set free into the retail music market. Jazz has been the predominant focal point for these types of record labels over the past two decades, but other genres, such as classical, rock and soul music archives have joined in this musical catch and cook of never-before-released, lost-and-found recordings.

The last and most prevalent independent record label model is the "reissue label." Reissue labels play an important part in the physical media music retail market by providing a great (and sometimes underappreciated) service for the dedicated music collector. In a nutshell, the reissue label model provides collectors and music lovers with newly re-pressed and (many times) remastered versions of original albums that may be long out-of-print, or those that might be too expensive or too elusive to easily own. Some reissue campaigns are based on entire series of albums from a particular genre of music, or discographies of a particular recording artist, or reissues based on the entire catalogs of classic record labels. This is where **ORG Music** comes into play. Though the label has released a small increment of original music, and though it also slightly dabbles in the archival market, it has more so manifested its name, reputation and existence into one of the world's most cherished and revered reissue labels. *Goldmine* had the chance to sit with General Manager & Partner, Andrew Rossiter, and discuss his music industry tenure, including the history and premise of ORG Music.

GOLDMINE: *Andrew, how did you initially make your way into the recording industry?*

ANDREW ROSSITER: It happened so organically over a long period of time, starting from the time I was in my early teens playing in sh*tty punk bands and having to book shows for my bands to play at. By that time, I was 16 and I was booking regional and national touring acts to come through. Then I went to school in Chicago, still dabbling in promotion and playing music at that time, when my first sort of real gig happened. I started doing an internship as College Marketing Coordinator for Warner Bros. distribution division, WEA, and soon I got hired part-time to co-manage that department. I was still in Chicago when I started that position, but I was told by everyone I was working with, "You either have to go to New York or L.A.; we want to find you a spot, but pick one or the other." I was always an East Coast guy, so I was going to choose New York — I have family close by. I like New York, it never even crossed my mind to go to L.A., and so, I moved to New York, still working that job, but interviewing for other job possibilities. After about six months into New York, I got settled in and I got a job offer. It was like, "You gotta pack your bags and move to L.A. in two weeks, because we want you to be in marketing in Burbank at Warner Bros. Records." So, that happened, and I lasted two years but it was during a big regime change, I guess you'd call it. It was kind of a good thing with the regime change, with all these new people coming in and out, because I got to network a lot. That role in marketing at Warner was more of like a project management role, basically touching every aspect of a release, and it was good because it kind of helped prepare me for what I do now.

GM: *How did all of this ultimately lead you to ORG Music, and how did the label come to fruition?*

AR: While I was there, one of my big projects was their vinyl initiative program, "Because Sound Matters." Record Store Day had just started and major labels were finally starting to pay attention to vinyl again, and I was focusing a lot on vinyl releases in my position. So, Jeff Bowers, who initially started ORG Music with my two current partners (Eric Astor and Manish Naik), was at Warner at the time, and he knew I wasn't necessarily happy in my roll there. They brought me in because they started this label, but none of them were really doing anything because they all had other jobs, so there was really no one managing the day-to-day. They had this idea for a label, and had licensed a few big titles, and gotten them out, but no one really managed the label daily, and they'd only released two or three records by the time I got brought in to be the label manager. About two years went by and Jeff departed the company to go on and do a bunch of other stuff. Eric and Manish brought me in as a partner, basically sweat equity brought me in as a third partner. For the first five or six years I was the only one physically working at the label, most of everyone else who worked with ORG at the time were third party designers and freelances and what have you, though now we have a slightly bigger staff, and we're about 500-plus releases in.

In a nutshell, the way that ORG Music started goes something like this: Jeff was originally a partner at the audiophile label Original Recordings Group (ORG) which pre-dated ORG Music and focused mostly on jazz and classical. Jeff wanted to venture into more of the rock, pop and alternative stuff and had already secured licensing for a few really big titles in those genres. He didn't see eye to eye with his partners about the direction of the label, and so they came to an agreement that he would leave the company, and the deal was that he could keep the licensing on these titles. So, he took them, and because the licensing was attached to Original Recording Group, he decided to call the new label ORG Music.

ANDREW ROSSITER

GM: *What is the premise of ORG Music and scope of the label's reissue projects?*

AR: I'm glad you asked, I think it can be a bit confusing regarding how people view us. It's not always clear

BRUNSWICK RECORD SERIES

BAD BRAINS RECORD SERIES

WESTBOUND RECORD SERIES

SUN RECORD SERIES

what the arrangement is. There are a few different ways we do this. There are record labels where we kind of do an overall deal, and we'll do a whole vinyl series and campaign of this entire label, someone who is not currently releasing vinyl or keeping things in print. These are situations where we would exclusively license from and rebrand, or simply relaunch the brand. Examples of this would include Black Lion Records, Westbound Records, Freedom Records, all of which we're currently working with a lot. There are other labels, for example, Sun Records and Brunswick Records, where we have a series of records that we've done with them, but we're not the only ones, there's no exclusivity in those scenarios. Then we have the imprints that we either started or partnered with; for example, Bad Brains Records. The band originally used the moniker "Bad Brains Records" for their first couple of 7-inches, and when the band began getting the rights to their music back from the various labels, we made that an imprint of ORG Music as part of our deal with them. And similar with Mike Watt [The Stooges, Minutemen, Porno For Pyros] and his label, Clenched Wrench Records — another example of that kind of arrangement. There are other smaller labels that will manufacture the product and provide it, that we distribute for them, because they don't have their own distributor. We're not promoting or actively selling their product, but we distribute it for them, and that's how we partner with them. And then there are plenty of catalogs with temporary licensing where we've done a handful of records, here and there, but not necessarily like a full-blown series. We did a lot from the Atlantic Jazz catalog, back in the day, and the CTI catalog a few years ago, and there's an example of that. In recent years the major labels have slowed down doing third party licensing, and we really prefer now to deal directly with artists' estates, or with the artist if they're still active, or with labels or label groups that are still independently owned that need help getting their catalog back out. It's nice to put money directly into the artist's pocket when you can, plus there's less red tape and you can be a little more creative in the process.

GM: *How do you decide what reissue campaigns the label takes on?*

AR: I don't want to say it's happenstance, but we have our network of folks that we know and that we talk to, and referrals from people, and such. It obviously has to be something that we like and that we enjoy, and that we see a need for reissuing. There are plenty of cases where we'll seek something out, labels or titles that haven't been reissued in decades, let's go see if we can get a license for it, and scenarios like that. There's a million different way that we come across titles. I'd say it's kind of a mix of artists that we already work with, referring people to us, catalogs that we already have relationships with, and then there's obviously some cold calling for records we're really passionate about, and often times that bears fruit and we can strike up a deal. But it's all under the umbrella of stuff that I like.

GM: *What do you see for the future of ORG Music?*

AR: Well, we're coming up on our 15th year as a company, and we're going to continue doing what we've been doing. But also, we'll be keeping an eye on growing in a way where we are doing more catalogs directly with artists as they get their masters back, like with Bad Brains. That's something that is a top priority for me, and the goal is definitely to do more of that. Reissues are definitely our bread and butter, but we also like specialty projects, like putting out anniversary releases for certain bands or box sets and things like that. We're about treating catalogs the way they're supposed to be treated. It's about maximizing already established artists, not about launching a new career.

Go to www.orgmusic.com *for more info.*

SLASH RECRUITS SOME NOTABLE VOICES FOR HIS NEW COVERS-THEMED ALBUM.

BY CHRIS M. JUNIOR

GENE KIRKLAND 2024

BONDING WITH THE BLUES

There's been an element of the blues in just about everything Slash has done ever since he first made his mark with Guns N' Roses. The guitarist's latest solo effort, *Orgy of the Damned*, raises the stakes. Instead of winks and nods here and there in solos and songs, the 12-track album is a blues homage. It's his take on material he likes: Some songs are classics that have been rearranged, while others that don't qualify as blues standards become bluesy when performed by Slash and company.

Orgy of the Damned (released May 17 on Gibson Records) technically isn't Slash's first blues-rock project. In the mid-1990s, he put together Blues Ball, a self-described "drunken cover band" that played gigs but didn't record. When it came time to assemble a group for the *Damned* sessions, he drew from his Blues Ball experience, recruiting two alums: bassist Johnny Griparic and keyboardist Teddy Andreadis. Through his music industry connections, Slash connected with guitarist Tash Neal and drummer Michael Jerome to round out the core backing band. For a producer, he brought in trusted confidante Mike Clink, best known for his work on GNR's *Appetite for Destruction*.

Like he did for his self-titled solo album in 2010, Slash tapped some famous voices to sing on *Orgy of the Damned* — this time around, he's joined by Paul Rodgers, Gary Clark Jr., Chris Robinson, Iggy Pop and Chris Stapleton, among others. And as Slash's blues-spirited S.E.R.P.E.N.T. Festival makes it way around North America this summer, he's open to the idea of joining forces onstage with his album's guest stars if they're available or with the artists he's curated specifically for the tour.

GOLDMINE: *You were exposed to all kinds of music growing up and once described your parents' wide-ranging record collection as "flawless." After picking up the guitar, did you ever go through an immersive phase of pure blues? Or was the blues just always there as a connecting thread to all the music you learned to play?*

SLASH: I go through different phases. I don't think I've ever gone through an immersive blues stage where that's all I did for like a year. But I definitely go through phases where that's all I'll listen to for a few weeks.

GM: *As a kid, though, did you —*

SLASH: As a kid, I think it was really a mixture of everything. I never stayed on any one thing for that long. So, no — I didn't go into an immersive blues phase when I was first starting out. It was a mixture of a lot of different things.

GM: *The blues is many things — it's a feel, a sound, a song structure — but for you, what are the qualities of good blues music?*

SLASH: The qualities of good blues music for me — it's almost not even tangible. It's a sincerity: There's a certain honesty in the playing and in the vocal delivery and the way that it's coming across. For me, when it's really raw (laughs) and sort of stripped down, it always appeals to me the most, even in electric blues. But I think [it's] the sincerity ... because it's not even

necessarily about the playing per se, like exactly what the notes are. It's the delivery, and the sincerity and honesty in that I think is the first thing that comes across to me.

GM: *And just like other genres of music, it's probably a "you know it when you hear it" kind of thing.*
SLASH: Yeah, definitely, because it's hard to put into words exactly what that is. It is definitely a thing where you just hear it, and you feel it. The *feel*: That's the thing that's most important.

GM: *The* Orgy of the Damned *backing band features Johnny and Teddy, and those guys were used to playing gigs with you as part of Blues Ball. What was their immediate reaction to your call about recording an album?*
SLASH: (Laughs) I'm sure they were shocked because it's been 30 years [since Blues Ball]. I've been in touch with those guys all this time, on and off. I actually had another band with Johnny after Blues Ball; he was in one of the iterations of Snakepit that I had. So we've been in touch, and I think before I called to say, "OK, I'm going to be home for a couple of weeks. Let's go do this record, like, now," prior to that, I was sort of alluding to wanting to do it at some point soon. I think it was in the back of my mind, and I let those guys know I was thinking about it.

GM: *How did you hook up with the album's other two core instrumentalists, Michael and Tash?*
SLASH: Well, Tash — I forget the name of the event, but there was a blues event in Los Angeles, [before COVID-19]. A whole bunch of us were playing, it was a bunch of notables all jamming, and one of the guys who got up there that I wasn't familiar with was Tash, and he was great. And I hung out with him, and he was this cool, sweet, very down-to-earth guy.

So fast-forward to 2019, and I was doing a tour with my other solo band, the Conspirators, and I asked Tash to open. He came and did his thing with *his* band, and he was amazing. We watched those guys every single night from the side of the stage before our show. So when it came time to do [this] record, I started putting together sort of a modern idea of what the Blues Ball means to me now — and sober. (laughs) I thought Tash would be a great addition because he's a fantastic singer, but he's also a great guitar player. And Teddy sings, so between those two guys, we could do this — and then I had the idea of having all the guest vocals.

And then Michael ... at some point, I had to look for a drummer, and I asked Jimmy Vivino [Canned Heat] for some names. And he gave me some names, and one of them was Michael Jerome. So I auditioned a few guys, and then Michael came in, and within like four bars, I [thought], *Oh, this guy is amazing* ... [and] when I say four bars, that was literally it.

GM: *The list of guest singers is impressive: Some are no-brainers, and others are slightly out of their wheelhouse. I'd put Brian Johnson in the latter category, only because the world mainly knows him as AC/DC's frontman, singing songs he co-wrote for the band or those from the Bon Scott era. It's interesting to hear his voice on other material with backing by other musicians.*
SLASH: Well, you know, the thing about Brian is nobody really knows anything about Brian except for that he's in AC/DC, right? We know he was in a band named Geordie [before AC/DC], but that's really it. But there's something about his voice that I've always thought had a great soulful quality to it if you ever took it down to this level. And when I was wanting to do "Killing Floor," he came to mind. He was the only person I thought of; it was almost like I imagined what it would sound like with him doing it, before I even talked to him.

I called him up, and he was excited about it because this [music] has a big influence on him from way pre-AC/DC days, and he covered Howlin' Wolf and some other blues guys. ... When [we got together in Florida], he started singing it, and exactly what I think I imagined, he did. He sang it down in that sort of gritty register where Howlin' Wolf sang it, and he was really into it. (laughs) It was cool. He was definitely somebody that not everybody would have thought of, but there was an innate thing in my mind that said that Brian would be great for this.

GM: *And then you have Demi Lovato — she's had a lot of success as a pop singer, but anyone with ears realizes she has the pipes to sing just about anything. What was behind the decision to get her involved?*
SLASH: Yeah, that's probably the most left-of-center idea. OK, so "Papa Was a Rollin' Stone" was a song that we covered back in the day, and a guy named Rod Jackson, who's a fantastic singer, used to do a great Temptations vocal version of this song. ... Fast-forward to this point: I don't want to get another guy to sing it just the way The Temptations do it. I [wanted] to get something different, and if I got a girl, it would be a more poignant way — a young girl, a young voice — [to] tell this story about asking mom about the late estranged father.

And then Demi came to mind, a lot because I know her voice but more so just because I know her. I don't know her that well, but we've met and had coffee a couple of times, and we've hung out and we've shared some battle stories. I thought of her because she's got this really young voice, but she's got a great, bluesy, soulful high falsetto. I called her, and it was the same kind of deal [as with Johnson] — really excited about the song. She had a connection to the song, and it meant something to her, which was a major prerequisite for anybody covering any of these tracks. ... I went up to the studio, and she put her heart and soul into it, and it came out the way that I was picturing it.

GM: *It's been a while since you've worked with Mike Clink. What led to reconnecting with him to produce this album?*
SLASH: Mike Clink is a great producer, but more importantly ... he's one of the most fantastic, real-deal engineers. He knows how to get a great sound out of a guitar or drums or a bass or whatever. He knows what he's doing. He's almost one of the last of the Mohicans because it's a dying art to be able to record a guitar through a cabinet. A lot of producers don't even know how to do it properly anymore. Mike was the guy that I knew could get these analog sounds that we were producing and get them on tape properly and make it sound really good, which is exactly what he did. He's also a great guy to work with, too.

GM: *Clink is partially responsible for "Metal Chestnut," the album's lone original, making it on* Orgy of the Damned. *How did that instrumental come together?*
SLASH: When he hit me up about having

In the Studio

Slash

Brian Johnson

Beth Hart

Chris Stapleton

Billy Gibbons

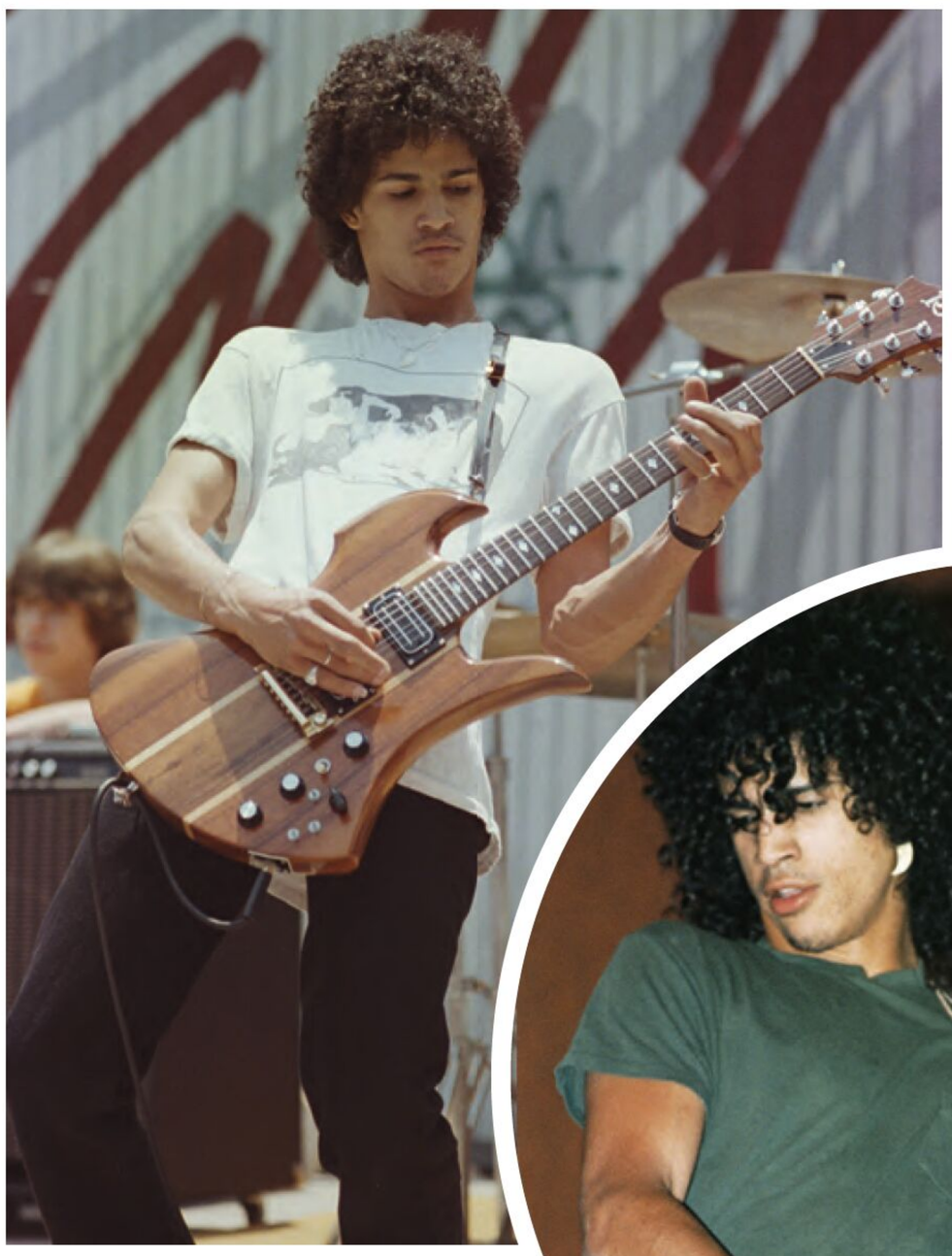
Gary Clark Jr.

Iggy Pop

Paul Rodgers

Steven Tyler

COURTESY OF SLASH PR

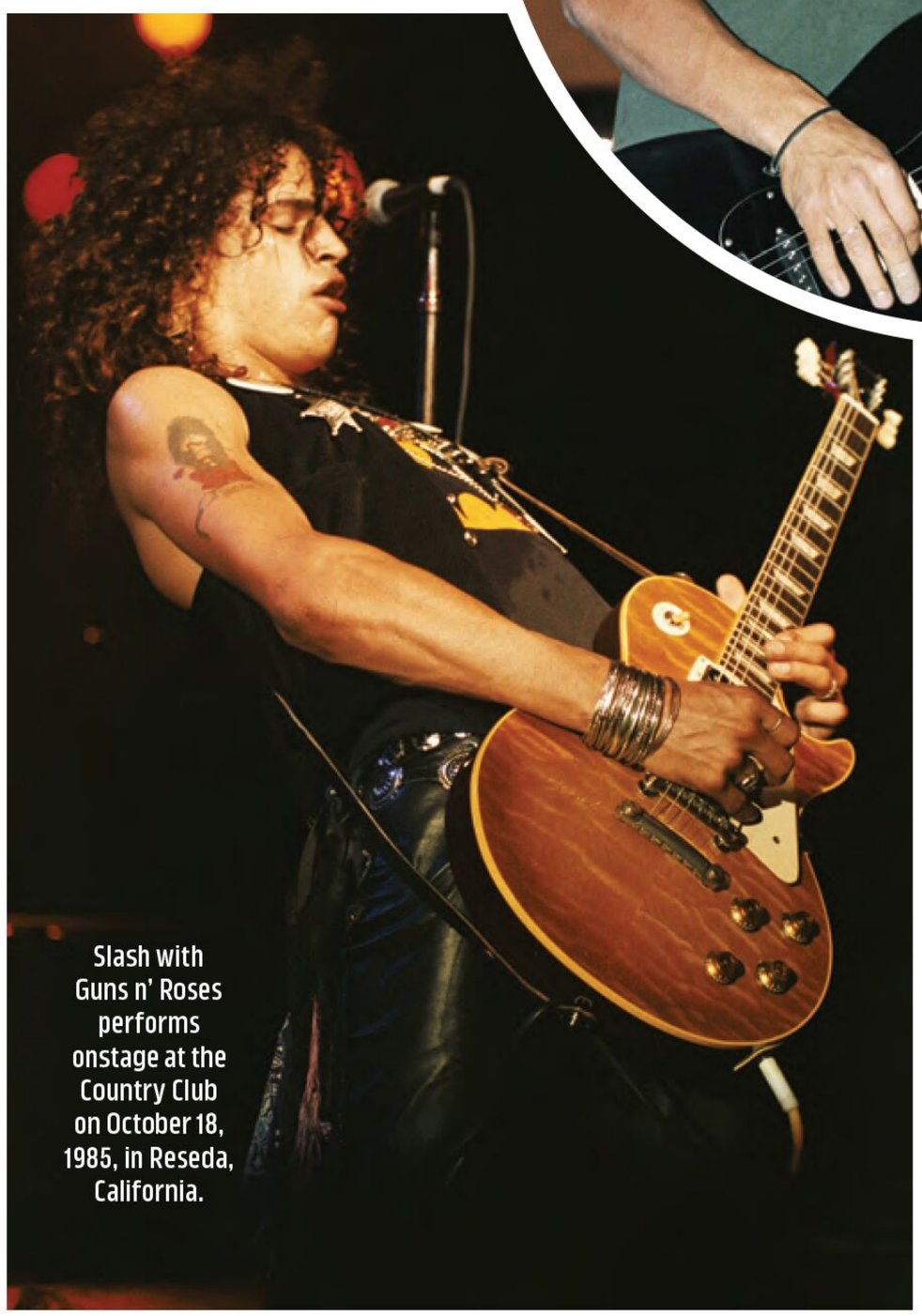


Guitarist Slash plays with his first band Tidus Sloan during lunchtime at Fairfax High School on June 4, 1982, in Los Angeles, California.

MARC S CANTER/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

Slash plays a Fender Stratocaster as he rehearses with his second band Road Crew at Mars Studio in October 1983, in Los Angeles.

MARC S CANTER/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES



Slash with Guns n' Roses performs onstage at the Country Club on October 18, 1985, in Reseda, California.

MARC S CANTER/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

Slash performs with Myles Kennedy and The Conspirators at OVO Arena Wembley on April 5, 2024, in London, England.

MATTHEW BAKER/GETTY IMAGES

Slash (left) and Joe Perry perform live at the announcement of Aerosmith with Slash featuring Myles Kennedy and the Conspirators tour on April 8, 2014, in Hollywood, California.

PAUL ARCHULETA/FILMMAGIC

an original for this, I was dumbfounded. It hadn't crossed my mind. I'd been so busy getting these arrangements done in such a short amount of time that it didn't occur to me. So I thought, Yeah, I should really do something cool like that. And I went home, and I wrote this bit ... relatively quickly, the parts came.

I brought it to the studio, and you have to try to imagine, I'm sitting in a room full of great session guys, real blues guys that have doing blues stuff for years. I mean, forever — that's their career. And I'm introducing this fingerpicking thing to them ... and I'm really nervous, so I'm playing it really fast and awkward, but they hung in there with me (laughs) until I finally got the idea across. Then it came together during rehearsal, the last day of preproduction. We'd recorded all of the music for the whole album, and this was the last thing that we recorded. And it was only a couple of takes; it came together quickly.

GM: *Of your many guitars, which ones were used to record this album?*
SLASH: I used a '63 [Gibson] ES-335 for more than a few songs on the record. I had a '56 [Gibson Les Paul] Gold Top, a '59 go-to [Les Paul] Standard that I like to use in the studio a lot, and a '58 that I acquired a couple of months prior to the sessions that's really nice named Bridget. I bought her in France, and she sounds like a Bridget. [Other guitars I used included] a '54 [Fender] Tele on "Living for the City" and I wanna say a '68 Strat or something like that for "Oh Well."

GM: *The* Orgy of the Damned *cover art is similar to the Ernie Barnes painting used for the cover of Marvin Gaye's* I Want You. *That can't be coincidental.*
SLASH: No, no, no — it was totally inspired by that. That was the idea that came to mind when I was thinking about a cover for the record, but obviously the Ernie Barnes one is too old and probably too expensive. So I commandeered an artist [Toni Greis] who I was familiar with that I really like [who's] on Instagram. I hit him up and gave him this idea. He wasn't familiar with the Ernie Barnes picture — he's from Germany — so I had to paint him a picture of it (laughs), no pun intended, and explain it to him. We had a couple of back-and-forths, but he got it pretty quickly, and it came together pretty fast.

GM: *You're going all-out to support this album — and the blues in general — with the S.E.R.P.E.N.T. Festival. Can you shed some light on how you went about putting this together, and also talk a little about the charitable component to it?*
SLASH: Obviously I wanted to support the record and go out and play live with this great band, so we sat with my manager and we ended up coming up with this idea of doing a festival. He said there were some promoters who would be interested in the idea. So we went around checking out what that would look like and started talking about different bands that I'd like to put on there and so on, and it just came together. The concept sold.

And so once we had that, then I thought it would be great to take some of the proceeds and be able to give to some charities — you know, people who have been marginalized and having a hard time of it. I mean, people are always having a hard time of it, but especially since 2020: It seems like things have been really divisive. ... So I thought, let's grab a bunch of different charities and try and give back to the community a little bit — make this a tour of bringing people together as opposed to the opposite. Make it all-inclusive and make it open to people of all colors and creeds and genders.

GM: *Can fans expect to see some brand-name singers from the album or from the festival's lineup to perform with you and your band during the S.E.R.P.E.N.T. shows?*
SLASH: You know, this is one of those kind of blues things ... I did a lot of sitting in over the years, jamming, and there's no real predictable way of knowing how things are gonna go. But all of these musicians love to jam; it's what we all love to do. So I would expect that along the way, there will be a lot of popping up with different people — within the lineups themselves and then also [with] whoever happens to be in town in any given city. I'm totally open to bringing people in.

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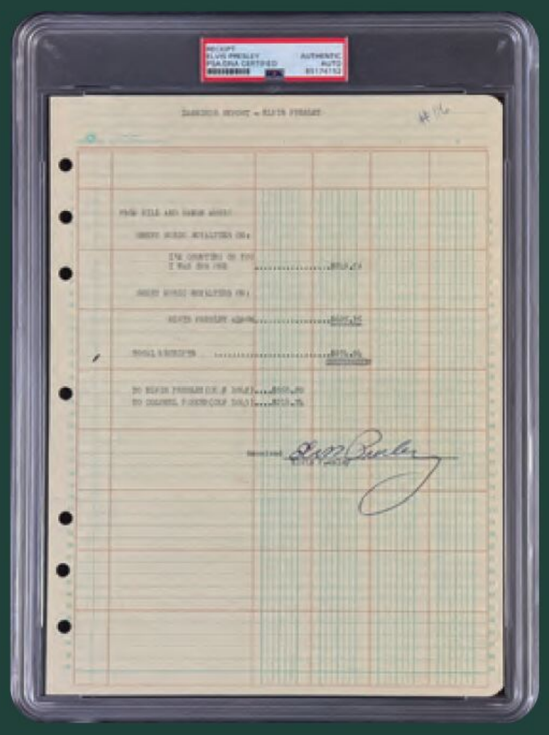

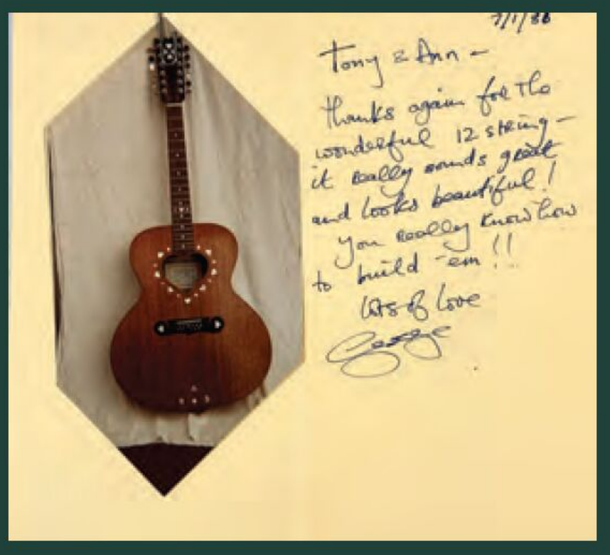

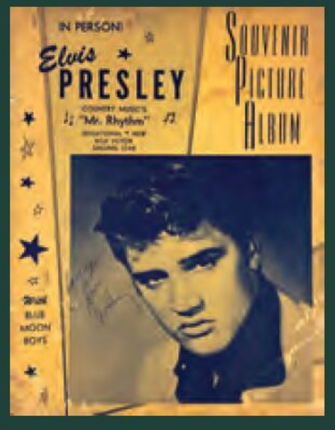

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THE ICONIC GUITARIST GIVES *GOLDMINE* THE LATEST ON **AEROSMITH** — THE TOUR, THE CLASSIC RECORDS AND WHETHER OR NOT THE BAND WILL MAKE NEW MUSIC AGAIN.

BY ANDREW DALY

KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES

Joe Perry performs during Aerosmith's Peace Out world tour at UBS Arena on September 9, 2023, in Elmont, New York.

JOE PERRY'S AERO-SOUL

When Aerosmith's Peace Out world tour kicked off in early September 2023, it was all good vibes to celebrate a career beyond the confines of reasonable imagination. But on September 9, 2023, in Elmont, New York, just a handful of shows in, things went wrong.

A few songs into the set, while performing "Rag Doll," singer Steven Tyler badly injured his voice to the point that his throat was reportedly bloodied and shredded. It was so bad that Aerosmith, a band that have spent over 50 years kicking the odds squarely in the teeth, faced foes they weren't sure they could defeat: Can't. Stop. Don't.

As for Joe Perry, Tyler's bandmate and fellow Toxic Twin, save for scattered interviews and a few social media posts, he's laid low. "This past year was kind of like a wait-and-see thing," Perry tells *Goldmine*. "We didn't know how long we were gonna be off the road, and then we found out how bad Steven's injury was, and we had to take it for real that this year was going to be different than we hoped."

He adds: "After we had this COVID thing, where nobody knew what was going to happen, and see what this plague was gonna do and things closing down and not touring, we felt like we were all in it together. But this time, finding out what happened to Steven was a heartbreaker."

Thankfully, as evidenced by the recent announcement that the Peace Out tour is back on, coupled with Tyler's appearance with The Black Crowes in West London for a rip-roaring rendition of the classic Aero cut "Mama Kin," all systems appear to be a go.

But given the severity of Tyler's injury and the cruel nature of the biz, Perry is optimistically cautious. "The whole production stage is being uncrated and built back up, and we're really excited about it," Perry says. "Everybody's kind of tentatively going, 'Great. We're gonna go back out.'"

He continues, "But, you know, it was such a sideways thing. Sometimes your singer gets laryngitis — sh*t happens. Or maybe someone fell and broke a leg, but this was a total freak accident and totally unexpected."

But uncertainty isn't something that Perry — an iconic guitarist who, alongside Tyler, Brad Whitford, Tom Hamilton and Joey Kramer — has spent a lifetime slaying the proverbial rock and roll dragon. Simply put, fear isn't in Perry's vocabulary. "We've always felt like we have something to prove," he says. "What's most exciting to me is to get out there, play, and see the fans, you know?"

"I want to get out there and play 'Dream On' one more time in a place like Pittsburgh. Our fans have been with us for so long, and we're just going to bring the best show we can, you know? That, to me, is exciting. I feel like I'm 18 again instead of feeling guilty for not liking golf." (laughs)

Perry has reason to be excited about

this, and why shouldn't he be? At a time when men half his age are dropping like flies, at nearly 74, Perry runs circles around the lot. Aerosmith's legacy means a lot to him, so he's going back and aiding in remastering the band's early records to open sonic possibilities for legions of fans prepping to see the band on tour come fall 2024.

"I'm hearing stuff that I didn't know was on the tracks," Perry says of the remastering process. "And it's not just the tone of the guitars; you can hear certain noticeable vocal things. It's cool; I wish more people would do it. There's a lot of classic music, like Deep Purple's *Machine Head*, that I think would be a hit if they remixed it. There's a lot of classic records like that."

Some 51 years after Aerosmith dropped "Dream On," a song that recently surprised 1 billion streams, and despite experiencing the lowest of lows and the highest of highs as a legendary six-stringer for the ages, Perry is soft spoken and contemplative. "We were just kids in the garage wondering if we could make a living doing this, and to put it in a couple of words — I still can't believe it," he admits.

"You think of people watching The Beatles on TV or Frank Sinatra, one of the most iconic ever," he explains. "You never think that people will come to see you like that. When we first started, we didn't know what we were gonna get. All we knew was that we could play clubs, make some money doing it, and have fun."

As he loads the trucks up and prepares to climb aboard for one more trip around the sun with his fellow bad boys from Boston, all Perry can do is express gratitude, with the promise that for as long as Aerosmith are out there, you better believe they're going to give us all they've got.

Despite having to cancel a world tour and watching his lead singer and longtime friend nearly lose his voice forever, words like "can't," "stop" and "don't" remain distant from Perry's mind. He and his bandmates, despite the odds, have locked them away again. That's how it's always been for Aerosmith, and that's how it is today.

With hopefully the roughest behind him, Perry's ready to empty the tank and lay it all on the line. "I've said it before, but we're fans," Perry says. "I know Steven feels the same ... Put on the best show I can. But looking back on it, I just wanted to play guitar, you know? To think that we've done everything that we've done, man, I can't believe it. I still shake my head."

GOLDMINE: *You're set to restart the Peace Out tour in September, which must feel like déjà vu.*

JOE PERRY: Well, I've got my fingers crossed. You know, there's a thing about making plans, and it becomes truer the older you get, and that's that plans change. All you can do is make the best plans you can and hope they come through. But everything's going well, and I'm excited about getting back out on the road.

GM: *As of now, there are only U.S. dates booked. Are there plans to canvas the rest of the world?*

JP: We've got our fingers crossed. All you can do is just make plans and go out. I just got the itinerary, and we're looking into cities ... we're going to be playing in places we want to go back to again and play one more time. I mean ... this is it. There's a lot of places we want to play, so I think somewhere after the first month, we'll start making plans for another leg.

GM: *But that's not fleshed out just yet, right?*

JP: I don't know where that's going to be; I don't know if it's going to Europe or Japan. But once we get rolling and it's good, and we're feeling good, we'll decide. I feel so bad that we had to stop the tour; people had tickets and were ready to come see the band. To have to blow it off was ... I mean, there's nothing worse than canceling a gig; forget about a whole tour. So, honestly, sorry about that, everyone.

GM: *Another layer of this is that, health permitting, the band sound incredibly tight now. How do you wrap your head around saying goodbye?*

JP: There's no road map for this career. There's a lot of people who have their five- or 10-year run, put out X amount of records, and they decide they don't want to put up with it. But we've decided, you know, the five, or the four of us ... we want to keep going for now. That's what we're thinking about now.

GM: *Speaking of that, let's talk about the set list. You've got over 50 years' worth of music to play, and I'm sure you want to sprinkle in some deep cuts.*

JP: Definitely. We were just getting rolling last year and only had a few shows in. We were pretty much playing the hardcore set list that got cut down to like 22 songs or so. But there's another 10 or 15 we really want to play, but if you're in the audience, and you haven't seen the band in forever, there's songs that you're going to want to hear. So, those kinds of songs have to be in.

GM: *It's gotta be a struggle to figure out what you can interchange and what you can't —especially given how many beloved songs you're working with.*

JP: Well, there's some that we can interchange. But pretty much, you know, anywhere from, like, 10 to 15 songs are going to be the ones that are there. But there's definitely things I really want to play live, and there's songs we may never have played before, or maybe just on one tour. I don't have the set list in front of me right now, but there's definitely songs from the 2000s, and the '90s that we maybe played on one or two tours that we'd like to do.

GM: *If not now, when, right?*

JP: Yeah, we haven't talked about it yet, but once we have some shows under our belts, we will. Like I said, these are the last shows, so it would be nice to throw some unexpected stuff in there. But for now, I think I can probably say that the set list we started with last year will be the one we'll be starting with this year for at least the first couple of shows so we can get the wheels rolling.

GM: *I was at the show where Steven injured his voice last year, and you never would have known it. Watching you guys perform and seeing how into it and physical you are is incredible. You could see the joy on your face while playing a solo, or while standing next to Steven during the outro of "Cryin'." It's clear you're having fun, but regardless of what you have to play, which songs are the most fun for you?*

JP: I have to say that I never feel like I *have* to play them. These are the songs I *want* to play; you know what I mean? We play "Dream On" almost every show, and with the help of the fan club, we have a list that says we've done thousands of shows, and it's really rare we don't play

Steven Tyler and Joe Perry of Aerosmith performing onstage at Hammersmith Odeon, London on October 17, 1976.

IAN DICKSON/REDFERNS

it. There's one-offs where we didn't play it, and it never felt right not playing it. So, we're playing these songs because we want to play them.

GM: *One of the more incredible things about Aerosmith is how aware you are of your fans and consistently build set lists that balance making them happy against fulfilling your wants as artists.*

JP: I've seen bands over the last couple of decades who have put the band back together, like, it's a reunion, and they go out there and they sound just like the record, and they're playing through Kemper [modeling] amps, with in-ears.

GM: *But not Aerosmith.*

JP: No. And not that there's anything the matter with that, but it just seems like ordered in. I just can't ... I don't want to do that. I don't want to go on the road if it's got to be like that. I'm just not cut from that cloth. But getting back to your question from before, I look forward to playing ... well, I think there's five songs that I really love playing, and that really check all the boxes.

And you know, there's one that we're kind of tired of playing, but after the first couple of minutes, the audience gets into it, and it's great, and that's "Dude (Looks Like a Lady)." I think Steven has problems with the lyrics; I don't think he likes them so much at this point ... I don't know. You'd have to talk to him about it. But it just has that tempo; it's one of those rock and roll songs that checks a lot of boxes.

GM: *The last time I saw you guys, I could tell you were having a blast ripping through "Love in an Elevator."*

JP: "Love in an Elevator," like you mentioned, is one. That's another one that I remember doing the video for, and that was a lot of fun. It's definitely... it's one that would have fit in our '70s hard-rock years, and "Love in an Elevator" is one. It's in that category. And that solo, you know, once in a while, you record one that really works and is good, and that one, I think I nailed. Another one like that is "Kings and Queens" — that one knocks it out of the ballpark for me.

Joe Perry during an interview at WPIX-FM radio station, New York, New York, January 27, 1980.

GARY GERSHOFF/GETTY IMAGES

GM: *I've always enjoyed that you're willing to break any guitar out onstage at any time. You've got a lot of guitars, and I know you've kept a lot of them off the road out of fear that they'd get too beat. Are any of those coming back on the road with you for this last run?*

JP: Actually, yeah! There's obviously the '59 [Gibson] Les Paul. But there's this six-string bass, which isn't the exact same one I wrote the riff with for "Back in the Saddle," but it's the same model. The first one got stolen when we were on the road, I think, in '77. I lost a few guitars that way and wasn't able to find a replacement.

The one [six-string bass] that I've been using is a Music Man, and they're built great. I mean, it's served me really well; I'll still pull it out once in a while. But I'm going back to the Fender; it's got a sound, though it's a little tough to play. After switching over from the Music Man, I can definitely tell as I'm doing the riff for "Back in the Saddle," it's tough muscling those bass strings with the Fender. (laughs)

GM: *How about your silver sparkle Gretsch Duo Jet or any of your other '70s and '80s guitars?*

JP: I'll be bringing the Gretsch Duo Jet; that's the one that I recorded "Dude (Looks Like a Lady)" with. And there's a [Gibson] Firebird that I've played on a couple of tours, but it's a design that's not that durable. The way the headstock and how the tuning pegs are like violin tuning pegs ... it's hard to find an old one that hasn't had its neck snapped.

I'm lucky enough to have one that hasn't, but I'm bringing that on the road because it sounds great and needs to be played. I'm also bringing the red 10-string B.C. Rich Bich, which I started playing again on the last Hollywood Vampires tour. There's definitely a couple of songs that it'll add to, so I'm gonna bring that out, too. I'd like to take more, but there's only so much room in a semi.

GM: *Guitars aside, is there a piece of Aerosmith memorabilia that you've managed to hang onto?*

JP: Let me think. In the stash ... I've been able to hang onto some things, but I don't know if it's anything I'd actually be able to use. A lot of stuff got ripped off, or lost, after I left the band in the late '70s. I think I've got a couple of my old foot pedals that I used in the '70s still in my rack. But as far as memorabilia, or something I've always had on the wall, I have to say ... no. There's just me. (laughs)

GM: *Elsewhere in Aerosmith land, you're working on remastering the band's early*

albums. What does that process look like? It's got to be a delicate thing touching iconic records and altering them sonically.

JP: Exactly. We recorded the first album, for example, on a 16-track tape machine, and the mixing methods were as good. It's really amazing what they can do now with modern equipment, and even the average car stereo is probably sounding better now than some of the equipment we were using in the studio back in the '70s. (laughs)

GM: *I know you've gotten into production and engineering more and more since the early '90s, so this process must be especially interesting for you.*

JP: I mean, the fidelity now is so incredible. I have to say that there's stuff you hear listening back to some of the remixes, and it sounds more like the band sounded in-person than the first records we did back then. You know, it's tough to talk about sound this way, but when you hear stuff through quality speakers or even earbuds, I mean, you can hear so much of what's actually there.

GM: *Is the idea to remaster the records in such a way that takes the listener into a place where they can imagine hearing the band playing in person?*

JP: It all comes through, and I think that's the reason for doing it. I mean, you can remaster stuff and everything, but sometimes, I kind of prefer the original compared to the remastering because it definitely gives it a different feel.

But it's all about what you want to hear. It's done on all the new stuff and equipment; it's interesting to hear. It's got to sound like the old record, but it's fascinating to hear the sound of the guitars: The remastering makes certain things so much clearer.

GM: *Like you said, it's all a matter of preference, as there will always be the person who wants it left alone. But this is a very cool project for those who want elevated sonics.*

JP: And there were things back then that weren't given as much attention to detail because of the sonic limits and physics of it back in the '70s. So, it's not like we're taking anything away: You can always listen to the original vinyl, and now, you can always listen to the remaster.

So, we're not taking anything away, but I mean, it's up in the air if you prefer the original or not. But without being a hi-fi snob, there's definitely something to remixing on new equipment that people will be [into] and that I'm fascinated by.

GM: *Speaking of classic records, Aerosmith have a ton of them. Which is your favorite?*

JP: I think it would have to be *Rocks*. I felt like with that record, we were really hitting our stride as far as being recording artists. After going through the first [*Aerosmith*] and second [*Get Your Wings*] records and learning what we did, that helped.

After doing the third [*Toys in the Attic*], I feel like *Rocks* was the first record that we wrote the majority of in the studio. I think that *Rocks* is the one. I don't know what it is, but, I mean, there's the latter ones that we did, up in Vancouver, like *Pump*; those were great, too. I'd say *Rocks* and *Pump* are probably my two favorites.

GM: *To your point, you've got a cache of records that are tough to follow. In your heart of hearts, does Aerosmith have any new music left in the tank?*

JP: You know, the band's been through a lot in the last five or six years. There's a lot left to the story, but we've had a lot of tough experiences. I don't know... we'll see. I would definitely be into it if everybody was onboard. We'll just have to see. I don't know, but I would love to do another record. We'll have to get through some shows; once we're there and we're rolling, we'll be able to know a lot more accurately.

GM: *As Aerosmith prepare to Peace Out again, Joe, what does this band and your accomplishments mean to you?*

JP: I'm still kind of in shock, frankly. I mean, getting asked a lot of questions about the band and thinking about my life and the energy of the music, I just shake my head, and I can't believe it. I thought about when I heard that "Dream On" hit over a billion streams or something on Spotify; I mean, that's a ridiculous number. It's unheard of, and it's brilliant.

I see something like that, and I immediately think back to the day I heard "She Loves You" by The Beatles or one of the [Rolling] Stones' songs, you know? I remember thinking, "I really want to learn how to play this." And to think that over a billion people listened to our band, it's like, what the f**k?! (laughs)

Let the Music Do the Talking!

For a change of pace, check out Joe Perry's solo albums. Start here with the below discography; as the guitarist suggests, he certainly let the music do the talking as his guitar sound always stands out.

Joe Perry with a Gibson guitar and a B.C. Rich doubleneck in the late '70s.

U.S. LPs

COLUMBIA

- FC 37364 I've Got the Rock'N'Rolls Again (1981) $20
- JC 36388 Let the Music Do the Talking (1980) $35

MCA

- MCA 5446 Once a Rocker, Always a Rocker (1983) $25

Current market value for records in Near Mint condition

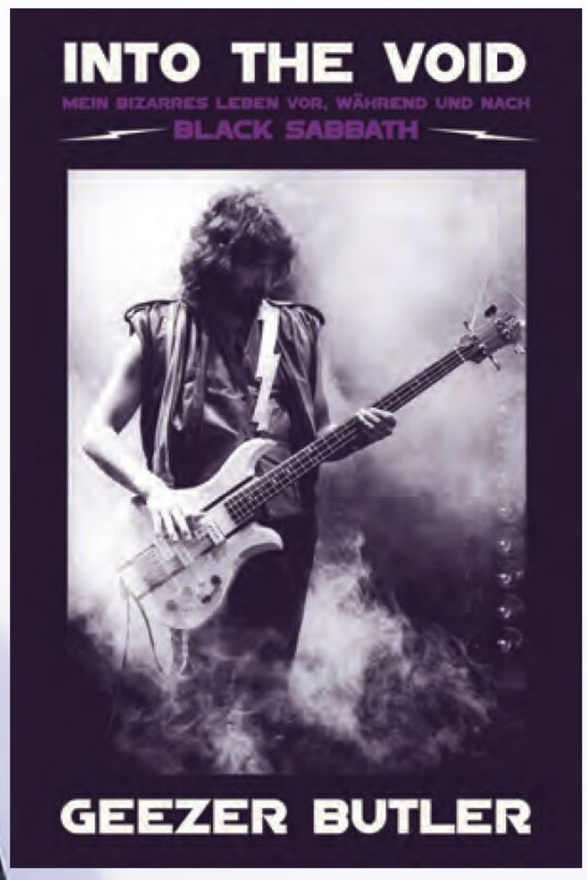
RON POWNALL/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

THE **BLACK SABBATH** BASSIST TALKS ABOUT HIS MEMOIR, *INTO THE VOID*, AND PUTTING GOOD USE TO HIS CREATIVITY GOING FORWARD.

BY PATRICK PRINCE

JASON LAVERIS/FILMMAGIC

GEEZER'S PERFECT RHYTHM



In his memoir, *Into the Void*, bassist Geezer Butler describes the sound and feel of his musical partnership with drummer Bill Ward as a hard rock "swing." Butler is attempting to define the unique sound of Black Sabbath's rhythm section at its best, quite evident in classic songs like "Fairies Wear Boots" or "The Wizard."

It is true that Black Sabbath's sound would not be the same without this rhythmic bond. Both musicians are placed firmly within the structure of Sabbath songs — Butler with his thunderous drive and Ward with his jazz-influenced backbeat. The team perfectly matched the pentatonic riffage of guitarist Tony Iommi and, in fact, *swung* their way through the most identifiable part of Sabbath's catalog.

Butler excelled as the main lyricist of the band as well. He tackled dark subjects with a stern warning or, at times, a glimmer of hope. Growing up in post-WWII, in a devastated shelled-out part of England (Aston), Butler's family lived under food rationing. Everyday objects that many of us take for granted were a luxury. His mom would often heat up bricks in the fireplace, safely wrapping them up in towels to place them in the children's beds to keep them warm during winter nights. It's no wonder that Butler pondered the dark and tried to make sense of it in lyrics in such gems as "Children of the Grave" and "Black Sabbath."

At an early age, Butler also became a strict vegetarian because it seemed to him the natural order of things. To this day he does not believe in using animals as a food source. You can say it supports his personal philosophy of conquering the darkness in the world.

His memoir is a fascinating read, besides the entertaining antics of Ozzy Osbourne and when and where the singer shat and pissed in public. Butler opens himself up to the world in the pages of *Into the Void*, in hope that people get a better understanding of the substance behind Black Sabbath's music.

The memoir's title also metaphorically states Butler's leap of faith while firing on all cylinders on Black Sabbath's launch into the (then) unknown world of hard rock music. The following is an interview with Butler about *Into the Void* (now in its paperback pressing) and, of course, other Sabbath-y subjects.

GOLDMINE: *Let's start with your upbringing. Most Americans alive today, unless they're nearly a hundred years old and lived through the Great Depression, wouldn't understand what it's like growing up with, say, heated bricks in the bed to keep you warm. Post-WWII was not the same for Americans as it was for the Brits. That struggle to survive seemed to give more substance to the rock music of the British Invasion compared to America's '50s rock and roll. Do you agree?*

GEEZER BUTLER: Yeah, absolutely. I think as you say, though, the British bands were ... everybody was on rations. You didn't have [a lot]. I don't think I saw an orange until 1965, for instance. And a lot of the bands from England at the time were all working class or lower middle class, and everybody was on rations, [especially] the working-class people. There was no heating or anything like that in your house. No indoor toilet, no bathroom, no hot water, hardly any electricity outlets. So it was quite a tough upbringing, really. But it's like what you're used to, and you don't really miss anything else if that's what you're used to. And I think that's what gave people that much determination to care for their environments, and everybody looked to America as the place to be.

GM: *A good word there is "determination." You did well with that. I mean, growing up vegetarian or believing that you shouldn't eat animals. You were determined to stick by your philosophy even though growing up in the '50s — and through the '60s, even the '70s and '80s — a lot of people in western culture didn't understand that choice. You have to respect someone who does that no matter what anybody else thinks. Did you bond with other musicians who were vegetarians? I mean, famously, Chrissie Hynde, now Paul McCartney — you probably finally met some who believed in the same thing, right?*

GB: No, not really. A couple of them maybe, but I mean, I didn't leave home until I was 19, so all I ever knew was what my mom made for me, and it was like vegetarian stuff. So I didn't know any different, and it was just the thought of eating dead animals that made me just ... I just couldn't understand why people would eat dead animals or dead fish or anything like that. And it wasn't this big thing going in the press saying, "Hey man, I'm vegetarian." None of that, because I didn't even know what a vegetarian was until we went to Germany. I went to this Chinese restaurant, everybody else was having chicken and stuff, and I say, "Can you just give me a plate of rice?" And the guy went, "Oh, a vegetarian." What's a vegetarian? People who don't eat meat? So it wasn't a big philosophical thing. It's just what I preferred to eat.

GM: *And Britain's pretty much meat and potatoes like America.*

GB: Right. Well, I was from an Irish family, and that's like meat and potatoes all the time. And then my dad was a big meat eater, and my brothers were, but my mom didn't really eat that much meat and she understood that I didn't want it. Plus, I was the youngest of seven children. So you're at the end of the food chain kind of thing. I think it's what you're used to, though. I think it's much harder if you've grown up eating meat to switch, whereas I grew up *not* eating meat, so it was easy for me. I mean, I say it was easy, but when I got on the road, all I could eat was baked potatoes.

GM: *And according to the book, sometimes you starved. You literally starved because of it, like in Germany ...*

GB: I had to eat the pig food.

GM: *Yes, because you wouldn't stray from your vegetarianism.*

GB: We stayed at this one place, and there was a pig farm next to it, and I used to go and raid the turnips they used to eat.

GM: *Yes, I read that. That had to be a bad stretch. But speaking of Germany, your stories about gigging at the Star-Club in Hamburg were entertaining. What's interesting is that The Beatles — almost a decade before — did the same thing, and the band jelled and became tighter with their live performance because of all the gigs you would [need to] play in one day. And even if it was without people in the audience, it was like a forced rehearsal. And that profited the band very much.*

GB: It was because you'd only get a couple of people in there in the daytime. It wasn't until the weekends where you'd actually get people coming in — and that was usually where they'd have a headline band. During the week it was just us playing to a couple of sailors and a couple of prostitutes, and that was it. So yeah, I think we wrote most of the first and second album there because that's all you had, that's all you could do. We didn't have any money to go out anyway, so we just used the whole thing as a rehearsal ... and to write the songs.

GM: *And Ozzy became pretty much a good front man at that point. Anyway, getting back to the lyrics. Being the main lyricist, you grew up in the flower power era, but you take a song like "Children of the Grave" and you turn the hippie philosophy kind of on its head, right? I mean, Buffalo Springfield were singing "For What It's Worth," and it kind of heightened people's awareness to what was going on. But as your song states, we have to do more than just be aware. We have to force the issue, or else we'll all going to end up dead. In "Children of the Grave" the message is darker, but it's more effective, isn't it?*

GB: Yeah. I mean, it's just the beginning when people started talking about pollution and stuff like that. And there was a lot of it around back in the early '70s — well, late '60s, early '70s, because up until then, all you heard about in England was surviving World War II and stuff like that. And then when that sort of became a distant memory, people started wondering about what the future's going to be. And you had a lot of people talking about how polluted the world was and this kind of thing, and it's just about our sort of getting away from the world to find a better place.

> **The song 'Black Sabbath' was a warning against satanism and going to the dark side.**
>
> — GEEZER BUTLER

Geezer Butler during a live concert performance of Black Sabbath at Madison Square Garden in New York City, New York, December 6, 1976.

FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

WATAL ASANUMA/SHINKO MUSIC/GETTY IMAGES

GM: *As the famous psychiatrist Carl Jung was quoted as saying, "In order to know the light, we must first experience a darkness." And your lyrics fulfill that guidance.*

GB: Yeah, it's like the old saying, "From darkness there comes light" kind of thing. In fact, that was one of the local football team's insignia on the shirts; the Wolverhampton Wanderers have "Out of darkness comes light." And so I quickly learned that quote, and that's what a lot of the lyrics were about. Of course, everybody else thought that because of the name we were all satanists and everything.

GM: *Yes, I know, and it's funny how you talk about wanting to get involved in the Catholic church as an altar boy, but it was brief, and then you stated "God's calling obviously wasn't that great." But for people who know Black Sabbath only superficially, they might not realize that your lyrics side more with light, or God, than Satan.*

GB: Absolutely. Yeah. I mean the song "Black Sabbath" was a warning against satanism and going to the dark side. I'd gone through a bad period of my life. I'd sort of given up on the Catholic church and was looking for something else to replace that, a big thing to grow up with. It gives you that spirituality kind of

Black Sabbath backstage before performing at the London Music Festival '73 at Alexandra Palace, London, August 2, 1973. (L-R) Tony Iommi, Bill Ward, Ozzy Osbourne and Geezer Butler.

thing. And then when that sort of wears off, you want something to replace it. And I was looking at all different kinds of religions, and at that time there was a big black magic thing going on in England. So I looked into that for about six to nine months or something, and bad things started happening to me. That's what the song "Black Sabbath" was about, a warning against going to the dark side.

GM: *And it's weird because you got to the point in the beginning where you weren't satanic enough for the satanists, but you were too satanic for God-fearing people. (laughs) So that must've been a freaky situation, especially for a band starting out, and [on tour, experiencing] all the religious craziness in America. Were you surprised when you first got to America, how extremely religious some Americans were — or as you call them, "nutters"?*
GB: Yeah, Christianity was almost dead in England at the time. It faded out unless you were Catholic and still went to church and stuff. But anybody else, the Protestant religions, it was like churches were closing down weekly. There was nobody going. And so religion was the sort of thing of the past. And then we got to America, and it was completely different. Absolute total difference. People were really into religion and Jesus and all that kind of stuff. It was a shock to us.

GM: *Nothing has really changed, has it? It's still kind of like that now, and yeah, I know I've talked to fans that they don't even get that [the song] "NIB" was sort of a metaphorical device. It's weird. And when we talked to Bill Ward, he said the record company was sort of pushing satanism so it could sell more records.*
GB: I mean, we didn't see the first album sleeve until literally a week before the album came out.

GM: *Which is weird, too. I got that sense when reading the book that you didn't get any test pressings at all.*
GB: We didn't get anything like that. No, we just went in two days in the studio, recorded the first album, and then sort of forgot about it. And then just the week before the album came out, the manager at the time called us into his office and says, "Here's your album." *That looks great*, I thought. We saw the front cover, thought it was great, and then ... there was an inverted cross inside [gatefold]. And I sort of went, *Oh no*! I was terrified to show my dad. He was like an ultra-Catholic, and he saw that inverted cross and went absolutely mental.

GM: *Do you still own the first editions of all those Sabbath albums when they first came out?*
GB: No, I gave mine away. We would get one album each, and of course all your friends going, "Oh, let's see your album!" And you'd lend them out and never see them again.

GM: *Yeah, because now having an original pressing of Black Sabbath on vinyl is worth a lot.*
GB: But you don't even think about that at the time. No. You just lend them out to people, to friends, family and stuff. And of course you never see them back.

GM: *What I found very funny, though, is your first introduction of Ozzy to the reader, and the eccentricity of him turning up at your door for the first time. Barefooted, a skinhead, calling himself Ozzy Zig*

"We didn't see the first album sleeve until literally a week before the album came out."

— GEEZER BUTLER ON BLACK SABBATH'S DEBUT ALBUM

*and carrying a chimney brush and a sneaker on a dog lead. Did you ever ask him, what the f**k was that chimney brush and other stuff?*
GB: (laughs) God knows where he got that from. And then I found out later that he said he had short hair because he just came out of prison.

GM: *You've got to think, is this just to get a reaction out of people?*
GB: Yeah. I mean, I couldn't even imagine when he set out from his house with the chimney brush, looking the way he did to get to my house, what other people must have thought of him on the way.

GM: *Did he do this all the time, or was this all a show to present to you?*
GB: Wasn't as bad as that. I think he just wanted to make an impression. But the thing that completely sold me was when he said he's got his own PA. "OK. That's it. You're in."

GM: *Well, he definitely made an impression on your brother when he answered the door. He thought,* What the hell? Who's your friend?
GB: Yeah. He said, "There's *something* at the door for you." "*Something*? You mean there's someone." He says, "You'll see."

GM: *I guess it was insane to him. Little did you know Ozzy would be sh*tting in an elevator in years to come. (laughs)*
GB: (laughs) Oh God.

GM: *Also, the rumor we all heard, that Ozzy's father made crosses for the band. That's true. Because there was some sort of satanic cult that cursed you for being phony, or some crap. But did his father bless the crosses with holy water or pray on them or something?*
GB: No, not ...

GM: *...They were made to protect you, though, right?*
GB: Yeah. As you say, the head satanist in England called us up to play up their Walpurgis thing in England. They had Satan's Christmas or whatever it is, and we said no. And so the next thing we heard was that he cursed us and the only way to combat the curse was to wear crucifixes. And I always wore a crucifix from when I was a kid being brought up strict Catholic. So Ozzy's dad made us all crosses to wear.

GM: *And big crosses as well.*
GB: Yeah. And that's what I mean, everybody really believed in all that kind of stuff.

GM: *I can imagine. And then when you got to America, as you said, you were kind of shocked. Maybe you should have showed them your crosses in America to say, "No, I'm one of you." (laughs) But one thing I've got to say about Ozzy. He hated that Black Sabbath became classified as a heavy metal band. Black Sabbath, even though heavy, defies being categorized. Do you agree? I mean, it's nice to say you invented heavy metal, but Sabbath was so much more. I wouldn't categorize it besides putting the albums in the rock section at a record store.*
GB: Yeah, because we didn't want to be restricted to one particular sound. I mean, these days you listen to a metal album, and it's all one sound all the way through. And we set out to be more like The Beatles kind of thing, where you'd have one fast song, one slow song, one ballad, that kind of thing. And we never want it to be restricted to just one sound.

GM: *And that's why I don't get down on* Technical Ecstasy *or* Never Say Die *albums. They may not be a fan's favorite albums, but they had a different feel. And it was the late '70s and, like you said, soft rock was in and you had other influences, and there are some great songs on those albums.*
GB: Yeah, and record companies were sort of panicking because of the punk thing had just happened.

GM: *New Wave, too.*
GB: It was more like you get an A&R guy coming in and saying, "You've got to sound like a punk band," or something like that. And it was a really confusing time back then, and there's some really good songs and then some that sort of lose direction.

GM: *But I disagree with Ozzy on this one: I think the* Technical Ecstasy *album has a great cover. That's a great album cover. I don't care if it's "robots having sex," it kind of speaks to what's going on today. Right? It's ahead of its time because now everything's not personalized with the internet. It's kind of like people communicate and develop relationships that have nothing. You could be in a relationship without even meeting someone. So it kind of speaks volumes.*
GB: That was my idea, that album sleeve. Of course, Ozzy didn't like it. But I didn't want to do the usual heavy metal sleeve that people were doing at the time. I wanted to reflect what the music was like on the album more than just one sound.

GM: *Well, maybe Ozzy would have liked it if it came out today. But it goes to say that those albums, I think, still have a place in the Black Sabbath catalog.*
GB: Yeah, I think it's just that we were going through a really bad period at the time. We're trying to manage ourselves and all the business side of it — trying to get away from our management and trying to change our recording and publishing contracts, and everything. We were like 80 percent businessmen rather than musicians.

GM: *That sucks. But after reading the memoir — I don't know if it's just me — but it seemed that after 1980, even after Ozzy left, there was a lot more drama in Black Sabbath than there was before. Ian Gillan ... that whole thing was just mind blowing about him living in a tent, and [Ronnie James] Dio getting frustrated all the time. And then there's Tony Martin. The whole thing seemed like ...*
GB: A f**king soap opera?

GM: *Yeah, the '70s seemed like there was at least a unit. But after that, like you said — maybe because there were different vocalists — it was like a soap opera.*
GB: Yeah, I mean the Gillan thing wasn't supposed to be a Sabbath album. We wanted to have a totally different name, and the record company insisted that it comes out as a Black Sabbath album. And, of course, the manager at the time says, "Oh, you'll get twice as much money if it's a Sabbath album." So that's the way it came out.

GM: *And even when Tony Martin was in the band, the same kind of thing happened.*
GB: Yeah, I only did one album when Tony Martin was in the band.

GM: *But that kind of was supposed to be Tony's solo stuff.*
GB: The first one when it was just Tony, that was supposed to be Tony's solo album, but the same thing happened. It's hard to get away from the Sabbath name.

GM: *And we were just talking about the*

last two albums with Ozzy. The Tony Martin years are really overlooked by Sabbath fans. Some don't even consider it.
GB: Yeah, it's not surprising, really.

GM: *Yeah, it didn't have the same Black Sabbath intensity either.*
GB: When Ronnie came in, that completely revitalized us. People were skeptical at first, and then when the [first] album came out, they saw how incredible Ronnie was.

GM: *I agree with you. And the* Mob Rules *album ... everyone talks about* Heaven and Hell, *but* Mob Rules *was a great album and that song is, for lack of a better word, killer. That is an intense song.*
GB: Yeah, we actually wrote that at John Lennon's house just after he'd been murdered. I think that's what gave us the inspiration.

GM: *And there were the albums afterwards ...* 13 *was a great one. That was a great reunion, too. Even though it did have its drama up until The End Tour. But you write at the finish of the book, ignore the rumors about another reunion. It'll never happen again. I guess fans should stick by that. You still stand by that?*
GB: Yeah. It's not going to happen. No.

GM: *But it would be nice to hear something from you, if you wrote music still. I mean, a lot of musicians still do solo stuff.*
GB: Well, I think it's been over 50 years. You never stop writing stuff. It becomes part of your daily routine. I'm looking at my bass now and I'm in the living room, and there's a bass sitting right next to me. I still fiddle about on the bass, or sometimes if I get an idea, I go up to a little studio upstairs and do write something. There's no pressure. It's not like, *Oh, I've got to write something.*

GM: *Hopefully, you continue to write. It's healthy for a creative person, even if it doesn't reach a mass audience.*
GB: Yeah, that's what I do now. It's just writing for my own pleasure and just to make sure that I still can do it.

GM: *Well, as a lyricist, do you ever think of writing anything else?*
GB: Yeah, I really have. And there were so many things I had to leave out of the book. All the stuff I had to leave out would probably make a really good pitch. (laughs)

BLACK SABBATH "THE GEEZER YEARS" SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Current market value for records in Near Mint condition

ALBUMS

AWSM (BOOTLEG)
- 13796-1 Cross Purposes Live (2020) $50.00

BS PRODUCTIONS LTD (BOOTLEG)
- No cat The End (2016) $40.00

EARMARK (EUROPE)
- 41045 Past Lives (2005) $150.00

EPIC
- 196587114621 Reunion (2023) $40

IRS (EUROPE)
- 713155 1 Dehumanizer (1992) $250.00
- 0777 7 13222 1 1 Cross Purposes (1994) $800.00

NEMS
- BS 001 (U.K.) Live At Last (1980) $25.00
- NEL 6003 Paranoid (2011) 25.00

RHINO
Note: Original rereleases only.
- R1 2923 We Sold Our Souls for Rock'n'Roll (2013) $50.00
- R1 2969 Technical Ecstasy (2013) $50.00
- R1 3186 Never Say Die! (2013) $50.00
- R1 552926 Master of Reality, 2-LP version (2016) $75.00
- R1 552927 Paranoid, 2-LP version (2016) $75.00
- R1 552928 Black Sabbath, 180-gram, 2-LP version (2016) $75.00
- R1 526573 Live at Hammersmith Odeon $400.00
- R1 558485 The Ultimate Collection (2017) $75.00
- R1 591001 The Vinyl Collection 1970-1978 (2019) $500.00
- R1 599496 Dehumanizer (2009) $100.00

RKO RADIO NETWORKS (BOOTLEG)
- CL 1383 Captured Live! (1983) $50

VERTIGO
- B0018538-72 13 (2013) $25.00

WARNER BROS.
- 2BS 2923 We Sold Our Souls for Rock 'N' Roll (1975) $50.00 —Palm Trees label
- 23742 Live Evil (1983) $50.00
- 23978 Born Again (1983) $50.00
- BS 2562 Master of Reality (1971) $80.00 —Green label
- BS 2562 Master of Reality (1973) $50.00 —Palm Trees label
- BS 2562 Master of Reality (1979) $40.00 — White or Tan label
- BS 2602 Black Sabbath, Vol. 4 (1972) $100.00 —Green label
- BS 2602 Black Sabbath, Vol. 4 (1973) $40.00 —Palm Trees label
- BS 2602 Black Sabbath, Vol. 4 (1979) $40.00 —White or Tan label
- BS 2695 Sabbath Bloody Sabbath (1974) $50.00 —Palm Trees label
- BS 2695 Sabbath Bloody Sabbath (1978) $25.00 —White or Tan label
- BS 2822 Sabotage (1975) $50.00 —Palm Trees label
- BS 2822 Sabotage (1979) $25.00 —White or Tan label
- BS 2969 Technical Ecstasy (1976) $40.00 —Palm Trees label
- BS 2969 Technical Ecstasy (1979) $25.00 —White or Tan label
- BSK 3104 Paranoid (1979) $50.00 —White or Tan label
- BSK 3186 Never Say Die! (1978) $50.00
- BSK 3372 Heaven and Hell (1980) $50.00
- BSK 3605 Mob Rules (1981) $70.00
- WS 1871 Black Sabbath (1970) $200.00 —Green label
- WS 1871 Black Sabbath (1973) $50.00 —Palm Trees label
- WS 1871 Black Sabbath (1979) $40.00 —White or Tan label
- WS 1887 Paranoid (1971) $100.00 —Green label
- WS 1887 Paranoid (1973) $50.00 —Palm Trees label
- WS4 1887 Paranoid (1974) $200.00 —Quadrophonic

ARMED WITH A NEW STUDIO LP TITLED *=1*, THE LEGENDS OF HARD ROCK GET PHILOSOPHICAL ABOUT ROCK AND ROLL. VOCALIST **IAN GILLAN** AND BASSIST **ROGER GLOVER** EXPLAIN IT ALL TO *GOLDMINE*.

BY MARTIN POPOFF

Ian Gillan with Deep Purple during a performance at the Rock Imperium Fest 2023 in Cartagena, Spain. The band were one of the headliners of the festival, along with Kiss, Europe, Skid Row and Helloween.

J.M.B/EUROPA PRESS VIA GETTY IMAGES

DEEP PURPLE

Greater than the sum of the parts

The cheeky wordsmiths in Deep Purple are at it again, following up records like *Who Do We Think We Are*, *Come Taste the Band*, *Purpendicular*, *Bananas*, *Now What?!* and *Whoosh!* with their most incendiary bit of album titling yet. Because the band's 23rd album is called *=1*, and if you don't like the title, wait until you see the cover.

But it all makes sense, as far as historic howler Ian Gillan is concerned. "I had half ... well, two-thirds of the album finished," begins Gillan, between bouts of getting in tour shape for the band's upcoming paired bill with progressive rock giants Yes. "But I didn't feel rooted, if you know what I mean. I didn't feel all the songs were coming from the same place. Not that I wanted it to be conceptual, but they didn't have that cohesion. So I did the usual and scrapped everything, tore it up and started again. It had been just driving me nuts every day with the bureaucracy that exists. Just to walk through a door, just to look at something in a shop window just to buy something or to deal with any large organization, this relentless question. I mean, I just want to buy something, but I have to go around the block three times. So I did an equation, a ridiculously long equation, that quite simply equaled one. And I thought, all that nonsense just to reach the target. And so that idea kind of developed from there. Then I thought, that would look good as like the workings of a mad scientist on a chalkboard. And I happen to know a mad scientist; so he did me a favor, doing an even more complicated equation with all the Greek symbols and everything. And that really got me started. And then I wrote the whole thing, all the songs, in probably two or three weeks after that. I was focused. So, the theme, to answer your question, is simplicity — keep it simple.

"This little equation," continues Gillan, "I had it on my desk. In fact, I've got it still here right now. It's pinned to the wall. And that was the root of every song. And I tore up eight songs completely, maybe more, just to clear the decks and get started again. And once I had that in my mind, it was great. So, I can relate every song back to the idea of '= 1.'"

Pressed for an example of why this came to be, Gillan exclaims, "It's unbelievable. Oh, God Almighty, I think one of the last resorts was there was me sitting in my small two-bedroom village cottage in Portugal with my studio at the back. And I was trying to buy something. I was trying to spend some money. And there was a robot asking me to prove that I was a human being by solving this bloody matrix of motorbikes or traffic lights before I could proceed through to the shop, just to window-shop or browse or do what I wanted. It happens all the time. And suddenly after we've become normalized, we become compliant. We can't resist. We lived for a thousand years under a system of law and order, and it served us very well. Because we knew when to push the boundaries and when not to. We get caught or, you know, don't be naughty. We knew where we stood with regards to the moral code or criminal code or behavior patterns. And then all of a sudden, in the last quarter century, we now live under a system of rules and regulations, which is

Roger Glover with Deep Purple during a performance at the Rock Imperium Fest 2023 in Spain. The first edition of the festival, held in 2022, gathered 40,000 rock and heavy metal lovers from all over the world.

(opposite) Ian Paice of Deep Purple performs at Campo Pequeno on November 6, 2022, in Lisbon, Portugal.

J.M.B/EUROPA PRESS VIA GETTY IMAGES

a different kettle of fish altogether. And you have to comply. You can't just say, 'Oh to hell with it; I'm going walking in the country and I'm not going to do this or do that and if they catch me, they catch me.' This time they're catching you before you've done anything and everyone's compliant. It's quite a challenge to see society as it is now. And I'm only referring to the complication of it all."

It's a fascinating concept, but in the end, it doesn't take over the album and make it a prog rock concept album. There are equally smart and nifty ideas that emerge on the level of individual songs. Take first single "Portable Door," for instance. Beyond the joyous hard rock chemistry of the thing — I really do think of all the recent albums, this is the Ian Paice record, and this song exemplifies that — Gillan conjures an amusing musing.

"Well, I was sitting there scribbling my usual gibberish," recalls Gillan, "and I thought of all these situations where it would be really handy if I could carry a little door around with me so I could nip into a room or nip out of a room, when the situation got interesting or dangerous, whichever it was. And I'm thinking of all these situations where it would be useful. And then you get metaphorical and think, *Well, I'm getting bored sick of this guy talking, so I'm just gonna slip out my door* — there it is. Or I'm bored with the jabbering and everything, so the public house beckons. I'll follow the call and slip in through my portal door. It's a handy little tool to have if you live in a surreal world."

What's also surreal is that the band are still at it and so vital at their jobs pushing 60 years in the business. *=1* is the band's seventh album of the 2000s. Roger Glover, the band's bass player, ex-producer and co-lyricist (except this time), figures they manage to keep up the pace by conveniently not thinking about it.

"I don't know about the other guys," reflects Glover. "We complain a bit about aging bodies, but our minds don't think that way. We're on this journey, and we're still on this journey, so make the best of it. Enjoy it. I don't think about the future like that. I think if you're worrying about the future, you're spoiling the present."

But it's pretty commendable that there's so much new music and of such high quality. Surely the band pride themselves on being "this kind" of heritage act.

"I don't think pride comes into it," counters Glover. "It's just that we can't help it. It's what we do. I think we're lucky enough to have an audience that is prepared for us in some way. If we were in the dark without an audience, I don't think it would happen, if it dissolved a long time ago. It's the audience that keeps us going. That's the fuel that runs the car.

"And if I worry about the future after I'm gone, that's a whole other thing. I won't care — beyond my control," he says, laughing.

PEDRO GOMES/REDFERNS

I remember when *Infinite* came out, Don Airey was asked, 'Is this the last album?' And he said, 'I thought the last album was the last album.' (laughs) It's a game, you know, what was going to be the last album?

— ROGER GLOVER

Fortunately, there's new life in the band to slingshot or telegraph them forward into and perhaps past the *=1* record and tour cycle. Deep Purple's new guitarist is Simon McBride, who took over for Steve Morse, who had to leave the band after nearly 30 years to take care of his gravely ill wife, who sadly recently passed on.

"Well, *Whoosh!* and all those albums were the Steve Morse era," figures Glover, "and that is really what makes the difference, because it's a guitar band. It wouldn't be a band without a guitar. The guitar is the focal point, after, you know, what the song is and the singer and stuff. But the actual structures of the songs come from the guitar. And Steve's got a different mind; he's got a unique mind. He's a bit more all-encompassing, if you like. And now we have Simon McBride, who is, you know, in his early 40s and grew up in a different era and grew up in the rough and tumble of Irish rock. So he's a different kind of guitarist. Simon has a grittier sound."

Asked to contrast Simon with Steve, Gillan explains, "It's always difficult when you're looking at that high level of performance. We've been blessed with some amazing guitar players in Deep Purple; absolutely blessed since Ritchie. I worked with Simon on an Eastern European solo tour, and I hired the Don Airey Orchestra for that tour. And Simon was the banjo player. Sorry, guitar player — I call them banjo players. And I raised both eyebrows, thinking, *Wow, this guy can handle it*.

"And I think before you start listening to people's expression, most times when you hear a guitar player, you hear their party tricks and licks and their show-off stuff and the histrionics and all the moves and everything else. But it's only when you get down to the long haul of writing an album or a tour when you can see the other aspects. Because, you know, five guys all equally adept at their instrument, it's the one who's got the most personality that you might want in your band. Or it's the one with the most durability who you might want in your band or it's the one that complains least about the food when you're on the road that you might want in your band. You might want the least disruptive of those equally talented men.

"But Simon's got it all, really. He's got a great sense of humor, he's road-hardened, he's had all the disappointments that we all had during our formative years and he's highly respected in the industry. He was already signed to our label as a solo artist; so that also dovetails beautifully into the arrangement. As a player, he's got a lot going for him. Number one, his articulation. And that's what I look for in a guitar player first of all. If they're sloppy in the slightest bit, then you know they're gonna get sloppier. But he's tight and articulate. His music is very lyrical; he's well-shaped. He's very good with arrangements, he's got a lot of drive and his rhythm playing is sensational; he fits in with the rhythm section. And he has the benefit of youth. Because the poor kid's only 44 years old, he's got all this drive that has kind of created a renaissance in the band. It's lifted everyone to the extent that we feel as if we're back in the '60s or '70s. I'm not talking about the music; I'm just talking about the joy of life. And so I can't help but praise him in every department.

"Steve was fantastic," continues Gillan. "We all loved Steve; his playing was immense. But Steve and Simon are different that for a start, they come from different backgrounds socially and culturally and that has an effect on your output, on your expression. The background of Steve, of course, was in Southern rock in America, and jazz. I mean, I love the story when Steve got fired from the jazz club in university in Florida because he had too much tone. And that says everything about the jazz brigade. (laughs) But I think that they're both up there, with tremendous vision and skills and expression. That's the important thing. You can't call yourself an artist if you don't have expression. In the end, being completely dispassionate, with my affection for Steve, it's a very sad thing that he couldn't continue. And it was so long, the gap, that we were beginning to worry that we would never get back on the road again. So we made the decision to start again, and Steve obviously wasn't able to. So it may seem cruel, but that's the way it is. I mean, in effect, one person's terrible sadness has turned out to be of great benefit to the band."

"The problem was, it was time," adds Glover. "We had a writing session for the album, and on the second day he got the phone call — his wife was in intensive care. So he immediately flew back. Which left us having a writing session without a guitarist, which was not particularly

Deep Purple's *=1* album as a limited-edition, purple vinyl, 2-LP set.

productive. It's very difficult. We sounded like a sort of Holiday Inn jazz band. But Steve was leaving, and we don't know for how long. It could have been a couple of weeks; it could have been a year or more. There's no way to tell and we couldn't wait, really. We had to make a harsh decision and say sorry, we've got to move on. It's not an easy decision to make, and there was a lot of sadness. After 28 years, you become pretty close to someone. I don't think he was that disappointed because he wanted to finish the band years ago. He just thought we were on such a good high after *Now What?!* and now let's have a final gig and we'll go out with a bang. And that's not the way I want to go out. I don't want to announce a final gig. I don't know what he thought, really, but I know he was thinking about it along those lines. That's why we called it The Long Goodbye Tour, as a compromise to him, saying, *Yeah, it's gonna end soon but we can't say when.*"

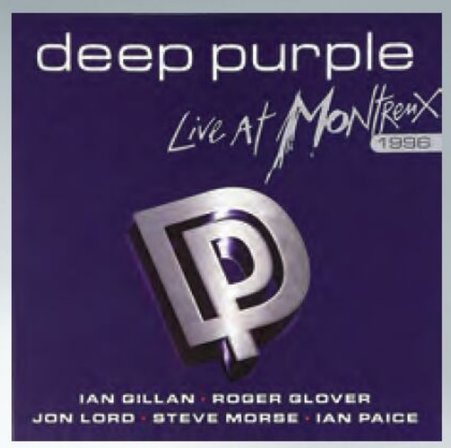
But it wasn't only Morse, says Glover, who was wondering when Purple might pass. "I remember when *Infinite* came out, Don Airey was asked, 'Is this the last album?' And he said, 'I thought the last album was the last album.' (laughs) It's a game, you know, what's going to be the last album? I wonder what socks I'm going to be wearing when I die. We did this new album simply because going on the road with Simon was a whole new experience and we just very quickly thought we'll do an album as soon as we can. We're hot, we've been touring, we're on fire — let's do an album right away. So that's why we did it. And we're gonna do another one at the end of this tour."

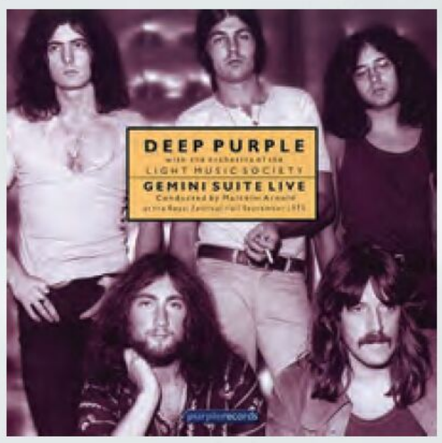
"When you've got that energy, you just want to get up and do things," seconds Gillan, in closing. "It's like in life. You know, do you want to sit down and flop around and watch a movie, or do you want to get up and go and do something physical because you've got this energy coming out? It's just human nature, really. We're on a high at the moment. Lots of things came into play and overlapped. There's a contiguous relationship with Bob Ezrin, either side of Steve Morse and Simon. We've done albums with both of them with Bob, who's got us a sound that I've been searching for all my life with Purple—I think that's one of the great things about Bob. So yeah, I mean, right now we're full of it." ●

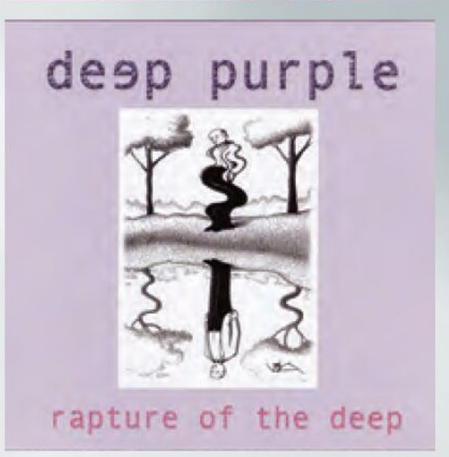
DEEP PURPLE "THE GILLAN YEARS" SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Current market value for records in Near Mint condition

ALBUMS







BACK ON BLACK (EUROPE)
- RCV 002LP Live at Montreux 1996 (2009) $30
- RCV 153LP Live in Switzerland 2011 (2015) $100

BBC TRANSCRIPTION SERVICES (U.K.)
- CN 1513/S Stereo Pop Special 12 (live 1972) $350
- CN 1859/SS Stereo Pop Special 48 (live 1970) $60

BMG (U.K.)
- 74321 115420 The Battle Rages On (1993) $150

CONNOISSEUR COLLECTION (U.K.)
- DP VSOP LP 125 Scandinavian Nights (Live in Stockholm 1970) (1988) $75

DARKER THAN BLUE (U.K.)
- DTB 101 Gemini Suite Live $75
- DTB 192 New Live and Rare $75

DCC COMPACT CLASSICS
- LPZ-2052 Made in Japan (1998) $500

EAGLE RECORDS/ROCK/VISION
- RCV083 LP Total Abandon Australia '99 (2012) $80
- ER 20083-1 Rapture of the Deep (2005) $100
- ERCVLP 080 Perfect Strangers Live (2013) $75

EAR MUSIC/EAR MUSIC CLASSICS (EUROPE)
- 0212940EMX In Concert with the London Symphony Orchestra (2018) $50
- 0209633 Copenhagen 1972 (2013) $50
- 0208578ERE Now What? (2013) $25
- 0211850EMI Infinite (2017) $40
- 0213920EMU Live in Newcastle 2001 (2019) $100
- 0214547EMU Live in Rome 2013 (2019) $80
- 0214744EMU Whoosh! (2020) $100
- 0214026EMU Live in Wollongong 2001 (2021) $60
- 0216966EMU Live in London 2002 (2021) $50
- 0217130EMU Turning To Crime (2021) $40
- 0217314EMU Live in Tokyo 2001 (2022) $60
- 0214022EMU Live in Hong Kong 2001 (2022) $60

EMI (U.K.)
- 7243 4 95306 Abandon (2018) $300
- 7243 5 91048 1 2 Bananas (2003) $300

HARVEST
- SHVL793 Fireball (2016) $40
- SHVL777 In Rock (2016) $30

MERCURY
- 824003-1 Perfect Strangers (1984) $15
- 835897-1 Nobody's Perfect (1988) $15
- 831318-1 The House of Blue Light (1987) $15

MUSIC ON VINYL (EUROPE)
- MOVLP 361 Purpendicular (2011) $50

PORTRAIT
- R2 38050 In Concert (1981) $25

PURPLE RECORDS
- PRK3223 When We Rock, We Rock, and When We Roll, We Roll (1978) $40
- PRK3486 Deepest Purple: The Best of Deep Purple (1980) $20
- TPS 3510 (U.K.) Powerhouse (1977) $20
- TPSA 7518 (U.K.) In Concert 72 (2012) $40

RCA
- 2421-1-R Slaves and Masters (1990) $100

RHINO
- R1-75622 Machine Head (2003) $40

TETRAGRAMMATON
- T-131 Concerto for Group and Orchestra (1970) $75

WARNER BROTHERS
- 2WS2701 Made in Japan (1973) $40
- BS2564 Fireball (1971) $60
- BS2607 Machine Head (1972) $80
- BS2678 Who Do We Think We Are! (1973) $25
- BS42607 Machine Head (Quadraphonic) (1974) $60
- BSK3100 Machine Head (1978) $40
- WS 1860 Concerto for Group and Orchestra (1970) $20
- WS1877 Deep Purple in Rock (1970) $40

SEVEN FROM THE '70s

NEW GUITARIST **SIMON McBRIDE** AND VETERAN KEYBOARDIST **DON AIREY** BOTH PICK THEIR SEVEN FAVORITE DEEP PURPLE TRACKS FROM A MAGICAL ROCK AND ROLL DECADE.

BY DAVE THOMPSON

FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS

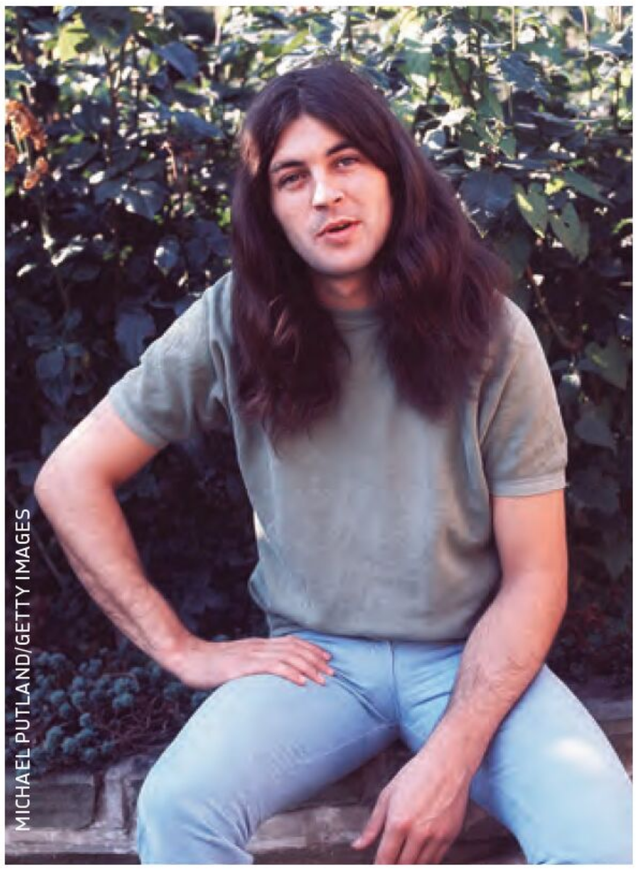
Roger Glover (left) and Ian Gillan performing live onstage in the 1970s.

Ludwig

Simon McBride of Deep Purple performs at Campo Pequeno on November 6, 2022, in Lisbon, Portugal.

PEDRO GOMES/REDFERNS

KOH HASEBE/SHINKO MUSIC/GETTY IMAGES



MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS

(left) Ian Gillan singing with Deep Purple at Nippon Budokan, August 17, 1972.

(middle) Ian Gillan of Deep Purple, portrait, U.K., 1972.

(right) Portrait of bassist Roger Glover, 1970s.

SIMON McBRIDE

The new boy in the Purple ranks, Northern Ireland's Simon McBride wasn't even born until the end of the 1970s, by which time the "original" band had been over for three years. But he worked with both Ian Gillan and fellow newcomer (a mere 22 years) Don Airey during the 2010s before replacing Steve Morse in 2022, and since then — "It's going good, man. I've had a few months off. We were busy last year and this year it's flat out from June until November with touring and stuff."

And yes, he's always been a Purple fan.

"I think so … I say I think so, but I can't remember what I did yesterday, never mind 30 years ago. But yeah, I always remember Deep Purple being on in the house because my dad was always a massive fan of music — Led Zep, Purple, Sabbath, all that stuff he was playing. So I was always a fan. But who wasn't? If you're into guitar and you're not a fan of Purple, there's something wrong."

He was quick, however, to plant his own identity over the songs they play, no matter how entrenched the familiar versions might be in the audience's minds.

"You just have to forget what's there and be yourself. Obviously, you can't forget the riffs and the musical content, but it's a question I get asked all the time, am I trying to be Ritchie [Blackmore] or am I trying to be Steve? And no, I'm trying to be me.

"Even though I listened to Purple and stuff, Ritchie was never a big influence on my playing, and neither was Steve that much. Not that I didn't like them, but my influences were like Gary Moore and Steve Lukather. I grew up in the '80s so I had [Joe] Satriani and [Steve] Vai as well.

"When you join a band like Purple, you have to say to yourself, 'Well, I'm here for a reason.' You have to have confidence in yourself. If you start always being someone else, you're not going to last very long. They'd notice and they're very keyed to that sort of thing, and they're great about it; they don't want Steve or Ritchie, they want me because it's a new chapter."

A new chapter with some fantastic old plot lines. So, Simon … seven from the '70s, please?

"'Perfect Strangers'! No, that's '80s. I'd also say "Hush," but I think that's '60s…. That's the thing with Purple, there's so many songs."

"Highway Star"

I would say it's my favorite, simply because … I dunno, there's something about that track, I love playing it live. It's got an upbeat feeling about it, it's fast and it's nothing too complicated. It's a really, really cool song.

"Bloodsucker"

I'm probably going to name all the hits but there's another one which we don't do and that's "Bloodsucker." It's one of the best guitar riffs I've ever heard — it's evil. It's a really cool thing and a cool song, and it's just the *sound* of it. Unfortunately we don't do it, but that's the way it is.

"Speed King"

Another fast song, I really like "Speed King." It's just high energy and I love when it just goes bananas in the middle of it, and the start as well. It's one of those things where, again, it's Purple all over. It's where we can do what we want and make a lot of noise and it's a song.

"Demon's Eye"

It's a great song. There's that organ thing, and Ritchie plays that guitar thing, it's really cool, but it's one of those ones that's not there too much. I remember the first time I did it was with [Ian] Gillan in 2016; we did a tour and that was on the set and I was, "Ah, I remember that one. That one's really cool."

"Fireball"

I don't think the *Fireball* album was one of Ritchie's favorites, to be honest, because it was done a lot quicker. But there's lots of great songs on it. "Fireball" itself is a great track. The funny thing with "Fireball" is, it's a pain in the arse … the intro to it. Because it's basically slightly out of time … the drums.

He [Ian Paice] does it deliberately. He comes in on a three or something; it sounds like it's starting on the one but it's not, and it's strange. You really have to be on your game with that one, and then it develops and keeps going. I find sometimes songs that have a double kicker can be a bit monotonous, but not this one. It's short enough; it's the perfect length.

"Burn"

I'm going to be controversial and I'm going to say "Burn," because I love that track. The guitar riff is one of those classics that Ritchie came up with.

We don't play anything from *Burn* and *Stormbringer* [or *Come Taste the Band*] — I'm not into the politics of Deep Purple, but those albums with [David] Coverdale and Glenn Hughes, we don't do anything with.

Coverdale — he's a monster singer, but I don't think he really suited Purple, to be honest. When he did the Whitesnake thing, that was David. When you hear that big album they did, he's unbelievable. He's one of the greatest rock singers on the planet. But I think his voice is a bit too big and growly for Purple. Gillan's a more sophisticated singer.

"Maybe I'm a Leo"

Great song, great lyrics, great melody, it's really groovy. And it's right up Paicey's street; him and Roger [Glover] playing away. I love all that stuff because when you're playing with Purple, there comes a point in the set with Roger and Paicey … you quickly understand why they are Deep Purple, because they lock together and they are a force of nature. Don Airey once described it to me as being hit on the back of the head with a baseball bat when they both kick in.

And one for luck?

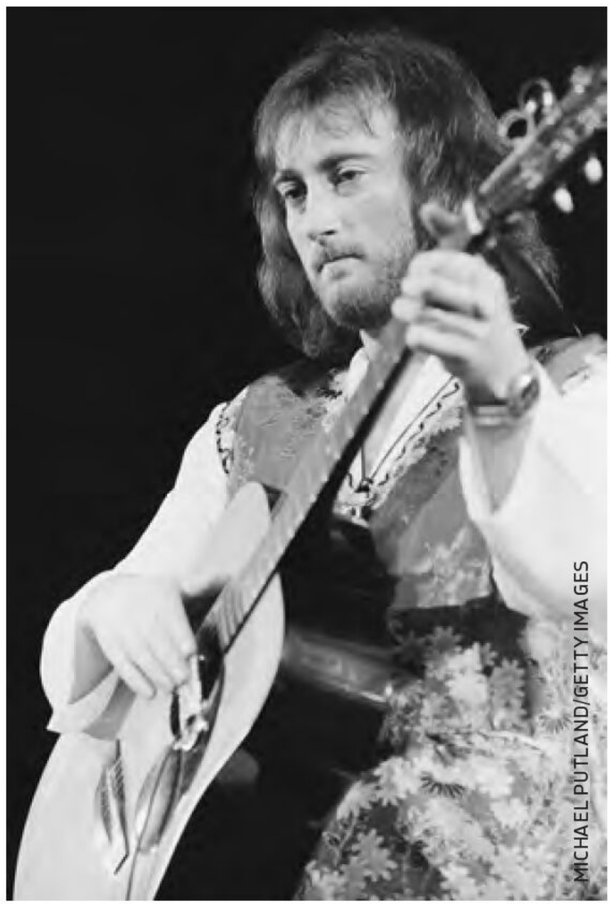
I suppose I have to say **"Smoke on the Water."** Sorry about that. Simply because it's the most played riff or song ever, and it's got to the stage people go, "Ah, not 'Smoke' again," the same as "Stairway [to Heaven]." But when you're standing up onstage every night and you hit the first chord, and the place goes absolutely bananas, every night, every show, I don't think I've ever seen an audience when they don't go bananas.

When we played South America, we were playing a bunch of festivals, 65-70,000 people, and when I started "Smoke," I couldn't hear myself; the audience was so loud. It's that appreciation — you think about this song; it's a simple guitar riff, there's nothing in it really. Gillan's melody is what everyone listens to. The riff is brilliant, but it's the melody. And when you have that many people singing it, and not just the older generation … I'd say a good 60 percent of the audience was young people, and they still appreciate a song that was done 50 years ago.

That's why I love playing. I don't get bored playing it; I don't get bored playing any song because of the audience. That's what gives me the buzz to keep going. That's why we're gigging, for the audience reaction — it's like a drug, the audience; it's the greatest feeling in the world, however many people it is, just going mental and appreciating you being there. You can't get any better than that.

Don Airey of Deep Purple performs at Campo Pequeno on November 6, 2022, in Lisbon, Portugal.

PEDRO GOMES/REDFERNS



MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

CHRIS WALTER/WIREIMAGE

FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS

(left) Deep Purple bassist Roger Glover playing an acoustic guitar in 1975.

(middle) Ian Paice performing with Deep Purple in 1976.

(right) Drummer Ian Paice posed for the *Burn* LP cover session in Warrington Crescent, London, in November 1973.

DON AIREY

Despite more than 20 years in Deep Purple, it's taken Don Airey a long time to shake off the "new member" tag. Excluding live recordings, he's now recorded seven albums with the band, meaning there's an entire generation of fans who've grown up knowing no other keyboard player.

To this can be added his membership of Cozy Powell's Hammer, Colosseum II, Rainbow, Ozzy Osbourne and Jethro Tull, and sessions as far afield as Whitesnake, Judas Priest, Andrew Lloyd Webber, and Katrina and the Waves.

But Purple have always been close to his heart, and with almost six months of touring coming up, they're about to get a lot closer.

"I was a big fan. I was working in a nightclub right up in the north of England. I had a little band, we were the resident band, and Virgin Records started a mail order business and the first thing that came through to this little house in the country where I lived, was *Tarkus*, Deep Purple *In Rock* and Carole King's *Tapestry*, all in one morning, all in one envelope. It was such a wonderful thing. Those three albums all in one day adjust the rest of your life."

And today? "We've had some time off for the first time in 20 years and I've rather enjoyed it. But I'm looking forward to going back out on the road, and my wife is very much looking forward to going back out on the road."

"Bloodsucker"

It's so heavy! And because of the way [Ian] Gillan goes off at the end, it was something new to hear, someone screaming like that, it was just so incredible. And such a great riff, it's so concise. Great solo from Ritchie [Blackmore], great solo from Jon Lord, an amazing organ sound. It's not been in the set for the last tour, but it was in the year before when Simon [McBride] first joined, because I think it's one of his favorites as well.

"Hard Lovin' Man"

That's the other one I really enjoy from that album [*In Rock*]. That's one we used to play quite a bit, second number in the set, and Paicey used to have his gong on the stage.

His drum tech, Chris, known throughout the years very fondly as "Props," used to hit the gong right on time every night, before the guitar solo, and we used to enjoy that. Then Props retired and we didn't have anyone who could hit the gong on time, so I got the job of doing it on the keyboard, and one night I must have stepped on the wrong switch and I shifted it from orchestral gong to trombone.

So instead of this gong sound coming out, there was a trombone and Gillan turned round to me and mimed the trombone. A very funny moment, and I hope it doesn't ever happen again.

"Fireball"

I've got to say *Fireball* is a very favorite album of mine, the title track especially; we've played that quite a bit but not recently. I think we tried it, but it was a bit of a disaster in the soundcheck. The drum track is just amazing on that, everything is just amazing. I talked to Paicey about it and he said, "We did everything in one go originally." He thought nothing of it, it just seemed like a throwaway track.

"Fools"

It's a great song. The *Fireball* album is very overlooked, but "Fools" is a great favorite of mine. When I first joined the band, Jon [Lord] was ill and I had a day's notice to come in. So we did a little soundcheck in this little club in Aarhus the day before the gig, and it went so well, they were "Oh, let's do 'Fools,'" so I had to learn "Fools," with this big piece Steve [Morse] had done in the middle, and I wert onstage for the first gig, 30,000 people, and I had to play "Fools" and everything else.

They don't mess around, Purple. At that same show, for the intro to "Lazy," I had to do a keyboard solo, a couple of minutes on the piano, and I thought it went pretty well, but after the show Gillan comes up to me and he said, "You know that intro you did for 'Lazy'…" and when you're a keyboard player, you get used to members of the band coming up and going, "You know that bit you played, do you want to shorten it, do you want to cut it down a bit?" And Gillan goes to me, "You know that bit you did? Make it longer, man, that's what we want." So it's like that with Purple, you've got to be on your top form and make everybody happy, including the band. Especially the band.

"Demon's Eye"

Another one from *Fireball*. We've played that a lot; there's something really rocky and basic about it. It's another one that sounds a bit like a throwaway, but once you play it, there's something quite sinister about it.

"Smooth Dancer"

I think maybe "Smooth Dancer"; one from *Who Do We Think We Are*. That's a wonderful album, in some ways I prefer it to *Machine Head* because the feel of it is so right-on, as it often is when a band is falling apart. Like *Abbey Road* with The Beatles, everyone's clinging onto everything, it has an amazing feel to it, and you can feel the tension.

"Woman From Tokyo" of course is a big favorite, but "Smooth Dancer," we did it a few times and I just remember it was an amazing song. Gillan told me it was him having a go at Ritchie, or something. It kind of ended the band.

"Rat Bat Blue"

Something else from *Who Do We Think We Are*. I used to love that, but we never played it. Paicey said they only ever tried to do it once, and it didn't work. It worked on the album, but it didn't work live, and that was that. A wonderful piece of music. It's the worst keyboard solo I've ever heard, yet it's the best keyboard solo I've ever heard. I was talking to Jon about it and he said, "Yes, I don't know what got into me that day." It's absolutely magnificent.

And, again, **one for luck?**

"We haven't played it for eight years, but I used to enjoy playing **'The Mule.'** Paicey's drum solo. It's a wonderful song. It reeks of the end of the '60s, flower power, beautiful melody, very busy drums, it's everything a band should be. It reminds you of that time, when [Led] Zeppelin were about and Peter Green and all the greats, Eric [Clapton] and Cream, it really is from that era. And we can all sit there and have a drink, rest our weary bones.

I used to be in a band with Jon Hiseman, Colosseum II, and he'd do the most amazing solo every night, but I remember he used to go on a bit, and we were playing in an ice arena in Czechoslovakia, and me and Gary Moore went next door and we watched a whole game of iceberg while Hiseman was doing his solo!"

Classic lineup (L-R): Alan "Blind Owl" Wilson, Henry Vestine, Bob Hite, Fito de la Parra and Tony de la Barreda pose for a group portrait at Kralingen Festival in June 1970, in Rotterdam, Netherlands.

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS

Current lineup (L-R): Jimmy Vivino, Rick Reed, Fito de la Parra and Dale Spalding.

COURTESY OF CANNED HEAT

58 YEARS OF CANNED HEAT HOTTER THAN EVER

BLUES ROCK ICONS **CANNED HEAT** HAVE REIGNITED IN 2024 WITH THEIR *BILLBOARD*-TOPPING ***FINYL VINYL***.

BY TONE SCOTT

Legacy blues rockers Canned Heat have tackled the decades with their signature brand of blues and rock. Through tragedies, trials and triumphs, they remain one of the most successful (yet under-acknowledged) legacy recording acts within the archives of recorded music. Since 1965, this appropriately monikered band have perpetuated, not without faulter, yet successively and subsequently without hiatus. Ever since their official 1967 self-titled debut release, the band have garnered some of the classic-rock era's most notable hits, such as, "Going Up the Country" and "On the Road Again." They have been branded onto the soul, spirit and mentality of music history, with such examples as their inclusion in the Monterey Pop Festival, several hit records, international radio exposure, television appearances (in their earlier existence), and most notably, the band's monumental 1969 performance at the legendary Woodstock Music Festival.

However, as many bands do, they have come against major life-occurrences and scenarios that have altered their existence and professional trajectory. The 1970 passing of founding member Alan Wilson (aka Blind Owl) was a devasting blow, one that the band could never have imagined at the time. Moving forward into the mid-'70s, they would experience the temporary yet extended departure of original producer and band manager Skip Taylor. And if Wilson's death wasn't enough, the not so shocking death of original co-band leader Bob "The Bear" Hite moved to indefinitely alter the band in 1981. Within the first 15 years of the band's existence, they would wade through the most monumental successes and the most excruciating tragedies that any band could experience that early in their career. Nevertheless, Canned Heat continue today. The brand name has been preserved through the years by the remaining original members and the added fervor of new players along the way, and just as much, the continuing over-the-top support by their international fan base.

Though original and early members Larry "The Mole" Taylor and Harvey "The Snake" Mandel would be a part of the Canned Heat lineup over the next 30 years (after the death of Hite), it was the leadership and wherewithal of drummer Fito de la Parra and his passion for preserving the Canned Heat legacy that attribute to the never-ending permeance of the band.

A little over a decade after Hite's death, the unexpected return of manager Skip Taylor would commence, and alongside de la Parra, the band would slowly but confidently and ultimately grow into a place where, today, they are becoming, again, a predominant classic-era blues rock unit. And while Larry Taylor and Mandel had places in the new millennium Canned Heat lineup, it has been the inclusion and inauguration of the three other members of the band's lineup, alongside de la Parra and co-leadership of Skip Taylor, that has duly led to the massive current day success that the band are experiencing now. With schedules busier than ever, and the re-blossoming recognition of the band as a legacy recording act, after 58 years of constant touring, multiple albums and a generationally growing fan base, Canned Heat should be accoladed as one of the most successful blues rock bands of all time. There are great stories to tell in reference to the band's beginnings, and now there are great stories to tell about the current era of Canned Heat. *Goldmine* was invited by the band into a treasure trove of Canned Heat then and now.

Fito de la Parra

Since the mid-to-late '70s, Fito de la Parra has honed the responsibility of the recording and touring activity of Canned Heat. In the early '90s, when Skip Taylor returned, it was the partnership of de la Parra and Taylor that would light even a bigger fuse underneath the band, something that would carry them through the next 30 years, landing inside this modern-day

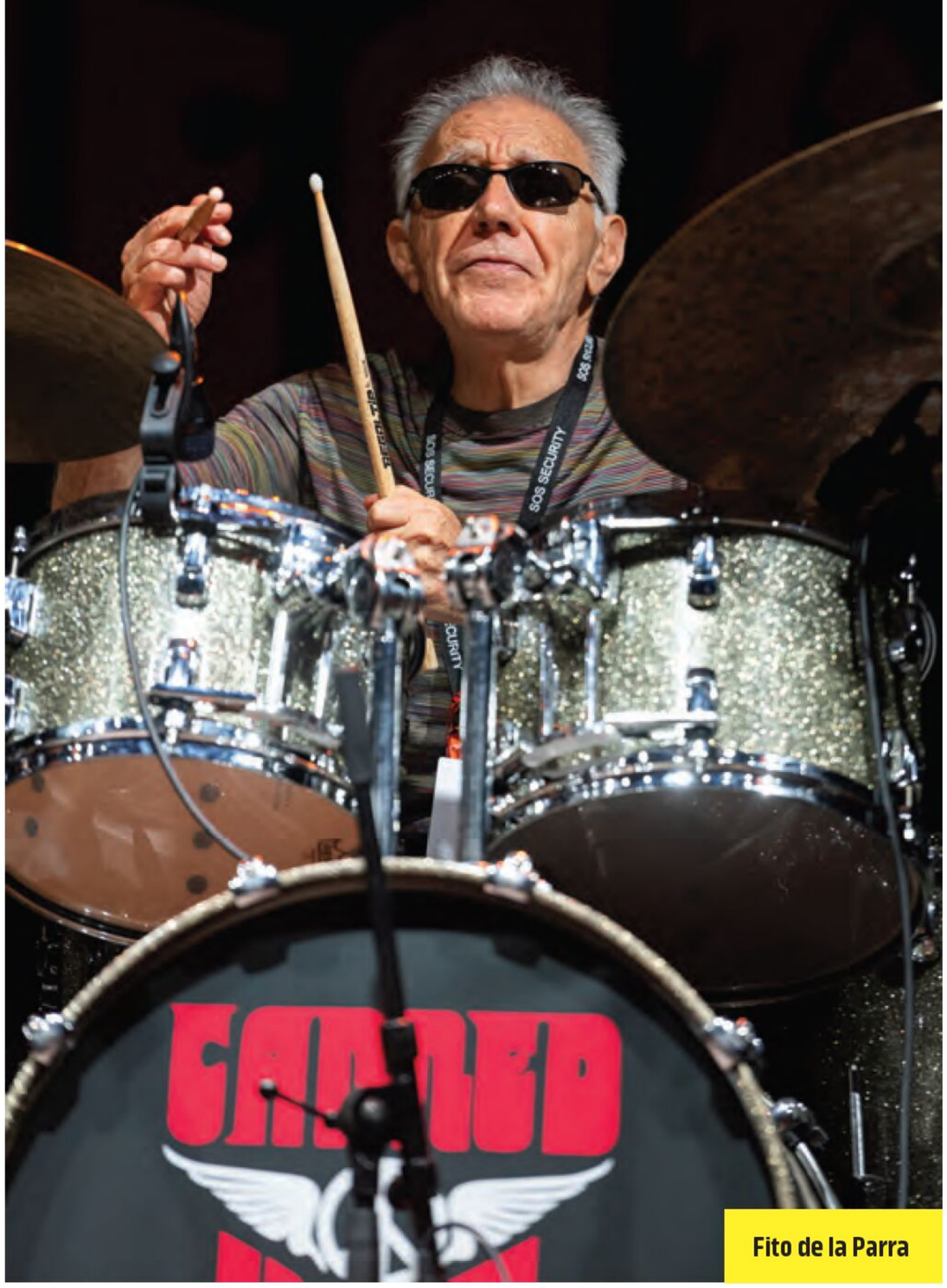
blossoming of refreshed successes and accomplishments on an international level.

GOLDMINE: *Fito, since the death of Bob Hite (1981), and even more accurately, quite a few years before that, is it fair to say that it's been mostly yourself keeping alive the original legacy and the integrity of Canned Heat?*
FITO DE LA PARRA: Well, you are accurate when you say that it was before Bob's death that I took over the responsibility of concern and business affairs within the band. Two to three years before his death, he was unfortunately operating on a totally dysfunctional level, and he was consciously aware of that, and that's why he didn't mind that I took over. At that time, he really didn't want the obligation of dealing with any of the responsibilities that came with the band.

GM: *So, in this journey, up until now, what is the most memorable thing about Canned Heat that you hold closest to you, and what is the one thing that you would change if you could?*
FDLP: The first one is so difficult. So, if you are asking what is the most important or memorable thing is in my career, by default I would say Woodstock. But is that necessarily my biggest or greatest or happiest moment? I don't know. There may be some other gig, with only 10 drunk guys in some nightclub, where we played so well and we were having so much fun regardless, so it's very hard to say, "There was 'this' one best." However, as far as my career and the career of the band, I guess Woodstock would be the most memorable because of its impact on culture and its impact on music history.

Now, as far as one thing I would change if I was able ... oh my gosh ... well, one of the things that I have always thought we should have been more careful about is, we should have taken better care of Alan [Wilson]; that's one thing I would have changed. And even speaking for myself, I was the youngest and didn't have a lot of influence within the band at the time. Decisions were made mostly by Bob and Skip [Taylor]. When Alan started getting really depressed and sick and drove his van off the road, it should have been a sign for us. I mean, we all did what we could for Alan, but I feel we could have been more aggressive as bandmates and friends in trying to keep him alive and take care of him. We were young, and we really didn't know better. So that is the thing that I wish I could have done over. To suddenly face fame and fortune, the demands that come together with all those factors ... I mean, fame and fortune do not come free; there is always a price to pay.

GM: *The band were on fire for so many years, even after Alan's death. However, was there ever a point in time, maybe after or even before Bob's death, that you thought to yourself, "I'm just going to call it quits"?*
FDLP: I actually talk about it in my book [*Living the Blues*]: There was one time when they [the other bandmates] really pissed me off. They were taking a lot of heavy drugs, and we were performing in a jailhouse. Because, to keep me out of Vietnam, we had to do these "social services" — playing in hospitals and jailhouses and stuff like that. This was in the early-mid '70s after Alan died. Larry [Taylor] was not with us at the time, and Tony de la Barreda was in his place, Henry Vestine had come back, Joel Scott Hill was now in, and of course Bob Hite. So,



Fito de la Parra

they took a bunch of downers to play this prison gig, they were totally loaded, and the cops noticed it. Things like Tony falling over on top of my cymbals and drums and all kinds of crazy sh*t, and all of this inside of a prison! They had bad attitudes about having to play "these gigs" to keep me in the band and not go to Vietnam, and I just thought, *F**k it if they don't like it.* I didn't like their attitude at the time, and I was ready to quit, but of course that didn't happen. Other than that, the only other thing is lately: With this amazing new acceptance of the band, I love it, but there is so much work coming at us, and I just don't want to work that much anymore. I don't want to stop playing music of course, but the extensive touring has become a bit overwhelming. This summer will make our 121st European tour, and that doesn't include all of North America or Australia or Japan. Playing local or one-off shows here and there is one thing, but I know with the success of this album there is going to continue to be a wave of offers. I'm not entertaining quitting, but I don't know how much more I want to do as far as the touring.

GM: *Would you say that you keep actively and successfully perpetuating Canned Heat because of the fans?*
FDLP: I love the fans; I always have appreciated our fans. After touring for so many years, especially the U.S. and in Europe, we have built such a core audience that always comes out to support us, and it's very special. But the main reason I keep doing this is because of the music. The music is very powerful. When I'm playing, I feel no pain.

GM: *After 17 years from the last studio recording, who brought the idea of doing a new album?*
FDLP: Originally it came from Joe Reagoso, from the Fri-

COURTESY OF CANNED HEAT

day Music record label. I had given the rights to Friday Music over the years, to remaster and reissue many of the Canned Heat albums that I had control over. Joe suggested making a new album, and Skip was excited about it, especially since Jimmy [Vivino] had come on board. I set Joe up with Skip to negotiate a new album, and the initial offer was agreed upon and everything went underway to writing and recording the new record. But Joe got sick, and then he disappeared after trying to renegotiate the original agreement. We continued rehearsing and continued recording, and in lieu of Joe taking on the project as agreed, Skip jumped in and started financing the project himself. Then, after completion of the album, Skip took it to Thomas Ruf [Ruf Records, Germany], who we'd done records with before. He heard the album and agreed to take on the record for the original budget that Joe initially agreed to. I can't imagine how Joe feels now that the album is as successful as it's been. I have a good relationship with him, but haven't talked to him since we released the record.

GM: *Did you expect the album to do this damn well?*

FDLP: No. I've always seemed to be in an uphill battle for the past 50 or so years. But, I thought, *We're going to do it again, and it'll be great with the new lineup.* Everyone is delighted with the album; it's been on the charts now for eight weeks. I guess this time was the right time, somehow, for the name Canned Heat to make a comeback.

Dale Spalding

In the early 2000s, harmonica player, guitarist and vocalist Dale Spalding — who had already played with some extremely notable names in recorded music — was introduced to de la Parra by a mutual musician friend in the North Los Angeles area. After solidly gigging with each other over a short time, Spalding was eventually asked by de la Parra to join Canned Heat in 2007. Never looking back after almost 20 years, he has become a more than integral part of the band's lineup in more ways than one.

GOLDMINE: *Dale, what was your "open door" regarding becoming a bona fide member of Canned Heat?*

CANNED HEAT BOOGIE WITH *FINYL VINYL*

One Last Boogie — This up-tempo classic boogie-woogie styled blues rocker (written by Jimmy Vivino), kicks off the track listing with the quintessential core energy of everything else to come. Its classic shuffle drum pattern is executed perfectly by Fito de la Parra and Rick Reed's deep escalating/de-escalating bass creates a beautiful rhythm section that keeps Dale Spalding's harmonica and Vivino's guitaring and lead vocals ripping through the entire song.

Blind Owl / ft. Dave Alvin — A song that seems to be a favorite with every member of the band, this is a brilliant homage to the late Alan 'Blind Owl' Wilson, original founding member of Canned Heat. This song was a surprise for the band, written by famed blues-man and member of the band The Blasters, Dave Alvin. It is a swing blues piece with Alvin's guest vocals (in spoken word form) and slide guitar, and Spalding's conflagrated blues harp taking the spotlight right alongside Alvin's incredible lyrics and storytelling.

Goin' to Heaven (In a Pontiac) — Another Jimmy Vivino masterpiece that brings the album's tempo back up to speed. As a personal nod to Chuck Berry from Vivino, the entire band explodes with rock and blues in with a slight rockabilly feel. The creative lyricism makes you grin, and the continuity of the band fuels you with energy. Dale Spalding's harmonica solo simply puts the icing on the cake.

So Sad (The World's in a Tangle) / ft. Joe Bonamassa — A smart decision to include this song on the album, over "Going Up the Country" and "On the Road Again." And though the original 1970 version of this song is raw, gritty and iconic, the band absolutely annihilates the original with this 2024 version. The slightly new arrangements are noticeable mostly in Spalding's absolutely poignant vocals and the unadulterated mind-warping lead guitar of Joe Bonamassa (which commences right after Vivino's intro of his Alan Wilson-style tribute). Moreover, with Fito de la Parra's perfect shuffle and drum fills and Rick Reed's in-the-pocket blues bass riffs, the band, with Bonamassa, breathes conflagrant breath back into this 54-year-old blues rock masterpiece.

East/West Boogie — As the album's only instrumental, you won't miss any vocals, because the track immediately hypnotizes you with its absolute sensuality and single-worthy sound. Coming to fruition through an idea presented by Dale Spalding, they took a cliché middle eastern ethnic riff (from a popular cable TV series), interpolating it into one of the most unbelievable blues rock jams in the history of any instrumental blues rock jam, ever. Every member seems to be performing in unadulterated ethereality. With Vivino's added Hammond organ accompaniment, aside from his 'hot-as-a-dragon's-breath' fretboard magic, de la Parra's pinpointed drum flows, Reed's wicked basslines, Spalding's harmonica, which brilliantly replaces the Persian 'Kamancheh' instrument from the original hook of the "Tehran" Apple TV+. show, and the percussion accompaniment from guest player Wally Ingram, this is a number one single release waiting to happen.

Tease Me — A beautiful Chicago Blues style piece infused with a bar room rock and roll tinge, composed by Spalding and de la Parra, this song is a fantastic cool down from the high blues rock energy of the previous two offerings. It brings quintessential balance to the album and was placed in the perfect spot in the song sequence. As usual, the entire band is in perfect harmony and each player performs dead in the pocket, and deep.

A Hot Ole Time — Bringing the tempo back up to speed, the band infuses another boogie-woogie styled blues rocker back into the track listing. With Spalding on lead vocals and Vivino's vocals on the assist, this is one boogie joint for the record books. There is not an empty spot for sound to be fit into this already perfectly produced jam. Vivino's noodling is of utter perfection, Reed's bass is never off point, and without the immaculate shuffle from de la Parra, everything would be lost. It just goes further to confirm that when this modern lineup of Canned Heat plays together, it's like they are glued together. If you like "Johnny B. Goode," you'll love this.

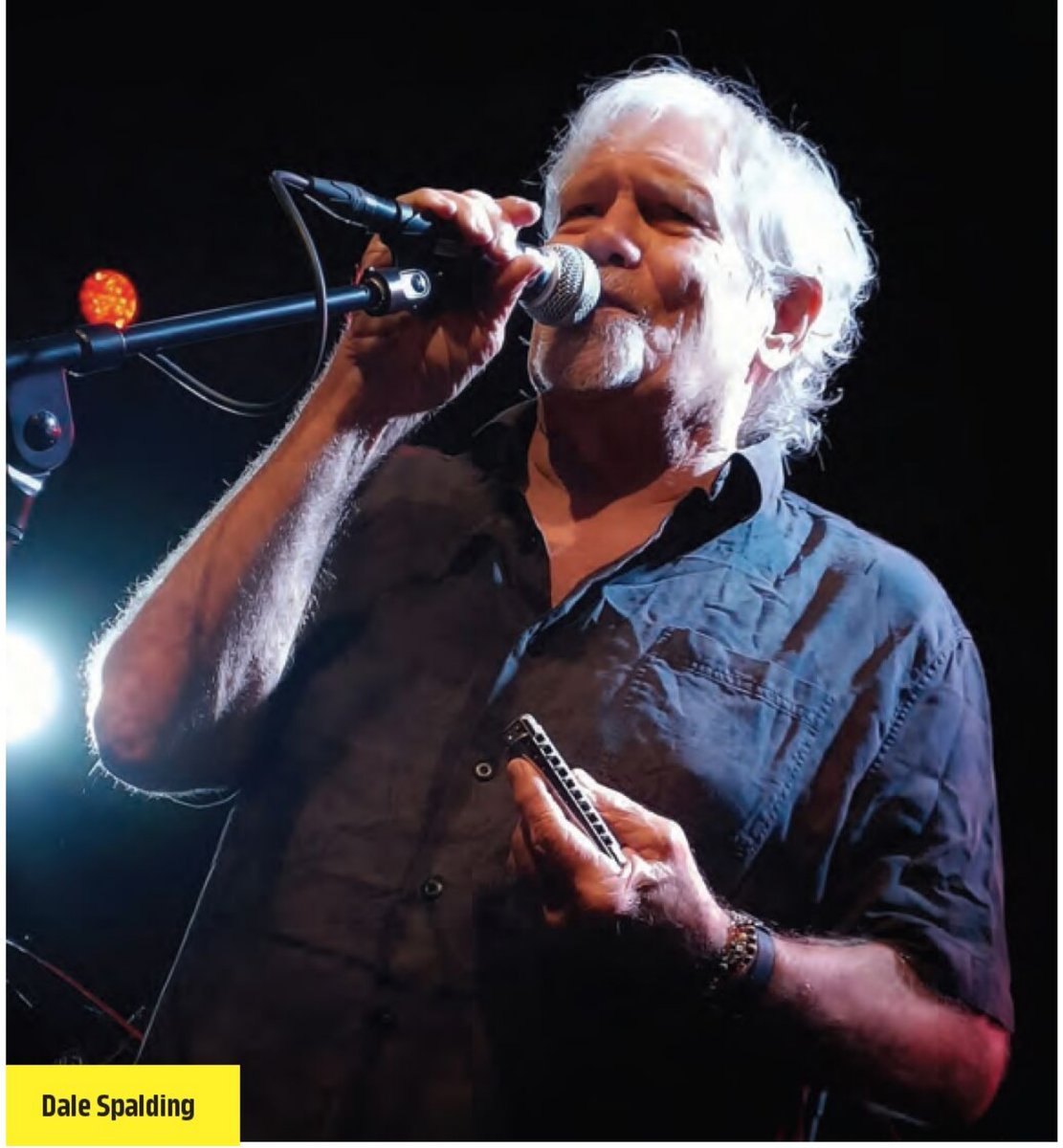
You're the One — If there was a ballad to be found on this album (though it does not technically qualify as a ballad) it would be this. Another great composition by Dale Spalding. While the lyrics are written well, however traditional, it is the band's instrumental performance that really makes the standout. Of course, Spalding's vocals are genre-correct, and his blues harp solo is genre-true, but it is de la Parra's and Reed's rhythm section that really carries this song along. Top it off with Vivino's masterful slide guitar, and you have a sexy-ass blues song that can highlight any date-night scenario.

When You're 69 — Jimmy Vivino, once again, commits musical murder, with his composition of this song, and his raw, expressive vocals. This could end up being an electric blues staple. The slow mid-tempo punchy drum-track by de la Parra greatly helps to set the stage for everyone else to simply let loose. Vivino's guitaring paints a genre-correct picture, as well as does Spalding's harmonica, as both dance all over this track. If it weren't for Reed's easy yet appropriately rendered bass lick, the track would be thin and simple. Thank goodness it's not. This is a damn good song.

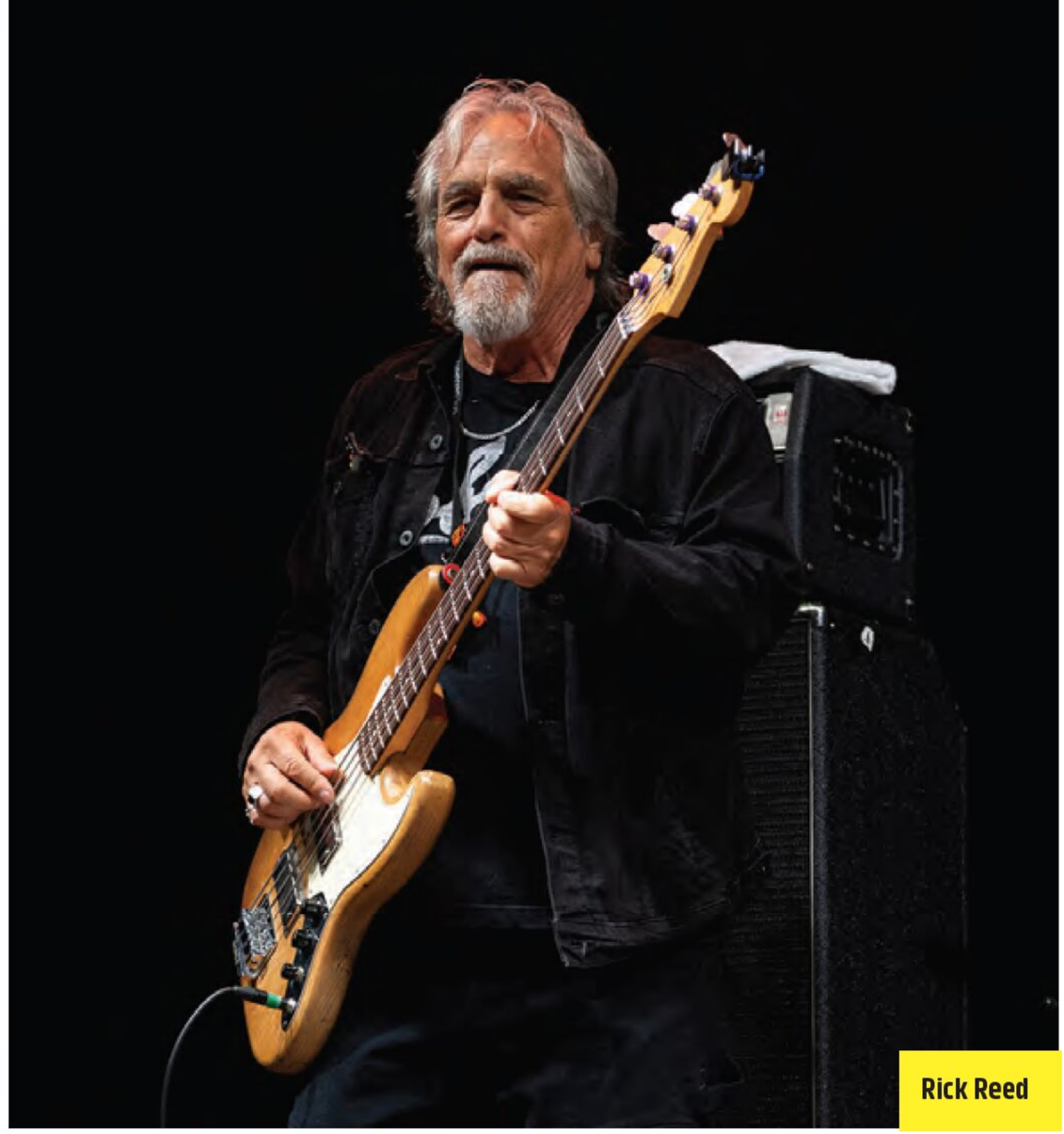
Independence Day — A sultry and deeply conceived song, it almost shadows itself under the radar up against the rest of the *Finyl Vinyl* material. It is a unique piece, juxtaposed up against all the previous music on the album. It almost possesses a slight French Chanson style, mixed with American blues. Nevertheless, it is the perfect transition toward the end of the album.

There Goes That Train — With a slight R&B/Doo-Wop intonation, this song marries with a true piano blues (West Coast blues) tonality. It exemplifies an American style of music that was, in the beginning, borrowed by the Stones, The Beatles, The Kinks and the like. It would continue to be integrated into music from artists such as, Eric Clapton, Paul McCartney and Wings, Grand Funk, Elvin Bishop, etc. This song creates the perfect ending to a monumental album, 58 years in the making. .

— *TONE Scott*



Dale Spalding



Rick Reed

DALE SPALDING: I had been living in Southern California, where I played with a lot of named musicians [Dave Alvin, James Gadson, Poncho Sanchez, etc.], but my mother passed, and I moved to New Orleans. When Katrina hit, I ended up in Austin [Texas] for six years. When I was in Austin, suddenly I was getting all these gigs in California. So occasionally I'd get hired to come and play in my friends' band in North L.A. and Fito, who knew them as well, used to come and watch us play. Sometimes when I would play with Poncho Sanchez, I would invite Fito to come and watch as well. Ultimately, Fito would sit in on drums on some of these gigs, and we finally got to play together. There was one instance in 2007, where I had a weeklong gig and I asked Fito if he would play drums. About the third night into these shows, we were getting ready to start, and Fito approached me and asked if I would consider being the frontman for Canned Heat [vocals and harmonica]. I said, "If that is a job offer, I'll take it!" After a short European tour, the band became me, Fito and then Harvey Mandel and Larry Taylor again — the three Canned Heat Woodstock veterans. I used to call them "The Three Monsters!" It was a good feeling.

GM: *Can you highlight some of your most memorable experiences since being in Canned Heat?*
DS: I'd have to say that the recording experience stands out for me. The atmosphere in the studio was so pleasurable. A lot of it was bare bones; we really didn't know exactly what we were going to do, but it worked out in the studio, and being a part of that process was very satisfying — it brought out the best in everybody. Fito just laid a lot of the sh*t down, and you just couldn't help but fall along, right into it. As well, Jimmy [Vivino] did a lot of production and arrangements, and working with him is a big treat for me. I mean, he's worked with everyone in the world, and you don't get to experience that a lot.

GM: *So, while you guys were recording* Finyl Vinyl, *what was your most memorable instance?*
DS: Well, I would have to say that having Dave Alvin come in with the song he wrote in homage to Alan "Blind Owl" Wilson blew us all away. He came in, and we hadn't heard the song before. Fito and Skip, they knew Dave's name of course, but they didn't *know* him, so I had to do some heavy talking to get him in. But once he hit the studio, it was so much fun bringing his song to life. We did it in about two takes; he just nailed it.

GM: *Ok, so what song or songs off the new album get you the most hyped when you perform?*
DS: Well, obviously I like "East/West Boogie," but I really like to perform "One Last Boogie." That song just takes off, you know. I love that song. But then, as everyone will probably say, it's really a heavy thought process to pick favorites.

Rick Reed

Bass player Rick Reed, after years with Paul Butterfield, Charlie Musselwhite and William Clarke (to name a few), took a position in Canned Heat over a half decade ago. Reed spent time jamming with de La Para and Larry Taylor in a side project that Taylor kept active in Los Angeles, before his unfortunate passing. Taylor, knowing he was ill, had suggested to de la Parra that Reed — whose bass playing was deeply rooted in blues — officially join the Canned Heat lineup.

GOLDMINE: *Rick, what connection did you have with the band before officially coming on board?*
RICK REED: Well, I had been friends and neighbors with Larry Taylor. Larry and Fito had this idea of having a little trio, with Larry on guitar, me on upright bass and of course Fito on drums. So, we formed this little group, and we started rehearsing at my studio in Van Nuys [Los Angeles]. This was a side project separate from Canned Heat. Well, about that time, Larry was sick, and not feeling so well. They had been trying out a bunch of other bassists for Canned Heat. In fact, Fito and Larry had discussions about who would take over the bass seat in the band, and according to Larry, "even though there were others who knew more and could read music better, etc., they didn't know the blues better than Rick did." That was the recommendation, and the band agreed [especially Fito

COURTESY OF CANNED HEAT

de la Parra], and I'm honored that they chose me.

GM: *What has been your best experience after finally having become an official member of Canned Heat?*
RR: Wow, there's a lot of them — that's really a rough question. Probably first and foremost, carrying on the name and knowing that we work very hard at it, and hopefully it shows. If I had to choose another (or a couple), it would be some of our best performances. Probably our Whisky a Go Go performances would be one. We also played a show at a castle in France which was actually Louie the XIV's country estate — historical things like that. Also, being involved with a chart-topping record has just been amazing. And just as Dale said, the recording experience has been unforgettable as well.

GM: *So, based on that last part, what was your favorite instance with regard to recording the album?*
RR: Well, hearing Jimmy's and Dale's vocals transpire the way they did, with this perpetual rawness and an organic feel was kind of special, but I would have to say getting to record with Fito was the most exciting. It's like I'm in a limousine, or like being on a cloud, that kind of feeling — it felt special. His playing is

> **I looked up at The Lord and said, 'I don't ask You for much, but I want Joe Bonamassa, because I hear him playing on this track.' I walked back into the studio, and Jimmy Vivino says, 'Hey Skip, Joe Bonamassa just called, and he wants to play on something; he's coming in at noon tomorrow.'**
>
> — CANNED HEAT'S MANAGER/ PRODUCER, SKIP TAYLOR

a different kind of thing. It's a different shuffle and feel. And he actually conducts the band and portrays dynamics a lot of drummers don't. It's very unique, and it was just a pleasure to experience in studio.

GM: *This may be a reoccurring question, but what is your favorite song on* Finyl Vinyl*?*
RR: Oh wow, questions like this take time to answer properly ... I like "East/West Boogie," "You're the One" and I like "Tease Me," which is probably my ultimate favorite. But in reality, everything is equal, like all children, it's hard to have a favorite.

Jimmy Vivino

Lead guitarist and co-lead vocalist for Canned Heat, Jimmy Vivino is no stranger to life as a successful musician. His impressive career dates back decades as a player, vocalist, orchestrator, producer, songwriter and bandleader. From being on-air music director and bandleader for virtually every incarnation of *The Conan O'Brien Show*, to having played with an uncountable amount of world-renowned recording artists, he now adds being part of an iconic classic blues rock band to his résumé. Vivino was the perfect choice to be given an official place with this legacy named band.

GOLDMINE: *Jimmy, how do you feel about the current state of Canned Heat and the blues?*
JIMMY VIVINO: You know, we're making a lot of noise, which I hoped was going to happen. I mean, we're not doing anything different than what the band have always done. Let me say this about Canned Heat: They have always done it their own way, and if we're being honest, they were really the first true blues-rock band. Because if you look at the [Paul] Butterfield Band, [Peter Green's] Fleetwood Mac and even the Stones back then, they were just copying the old Chicago blues records. Nevertheless, they did a great job and they spread the good word, but Canned Heat, they just didn't do that. They were really the first ones to do it the way they felt it. They deserve more accolades for that, and I'm happy to now contribute to that. And for years there was this climate that the blues were uncool. Now, even my good buddy Slash is making a blues record. It's like, now everyone wants to make a blues album.

GM: *Can you tell us how you came to officially join the band?*
JV: Rick and I have been playing together for 34 years, since 1990. When I came to Los Angeles, working with Disney on the first *Sister Act* movie, Rick started taking me around to all these blues clubs. Even though I was working as a composer, orchestrator and arranger for movies, he knew I was a blues guy, so he took me around and introduced me to everybody. And I knew the minute I moved out to L.A. we'd be playing together, but not together in Canned Heat — that wasn't even in my wildest imagination. Eventually, I would meet Larry Taylor playing around all these clubs, and he took real kindly to me, and eventually we realized we knew many of the same players, and we played together a lot over the years. And because I played around, I also came to know Harvey Mandel and other players who had ties to Canned Heat. So, after years with Conan [O'Brien], my gig ended, and Rick was always the advocate for wanting to tie me in with Canned Heat. He said, "I want you to meet Fito; let's just go over to his house and gig, just to play." So, we went over there, and I walked in, and the first thing Fito says to me was, "You look like Canned Heat." And then we played, and it was great, and he tutored me and pulled out vinyl records and played them to show me examples of what Alan was playing and what Henry was playing back

COURTESY OF CANNED HEAT

Jimmy Vivino

then because he really cares about this stuff being right. It was amazing — before I left that day, he told me, "If you really want to do it, but you really have to want to do it, you're in," and now, here we are.

GM: *I've asked the other guys this: What is your most memorable experience so far playing in the band?*
JV: Playing the Whisky a Go Go for the first time. We played again during the venue's 60th anniversary, and that was cool. However, for me, playing it for the first time with the band was like walking onto the battlefield at Gettysburg. I mean, there's years of [music] notes that went up into that room, still bouncing around up there, everyone from Canned Heat to The Doors and The Chambers Brothers, and even the really real guys, like Muddy Waters and Little Walter, and I can keep going if you don't stop me.

GM: *OK, then let me ask you this: What was your favorite experience recording the new album?*
JV: Easy ... without a doubt, Dave Alvin walking into the studio. I knew Dave, and I'd watched him play for years, and originally, he was just supposed to come and play on "Pontiac" — I was going to play piano, and he was going to play guitar. But when he came in and said, "I brought a song, guys," I said, "Oh yeah." He sat down and played it ["Blind Owl"], and we just went along with him for a while, and then we played it all the way through once, and he said, "OK, let's record it," and that was it, man.

GM: *What's the most magical thing about the current state of the band?*
JV: Well, I'm still a fan. When I was 13 years old in 1968, my older brother brought home "On the Road Again," and we listened to it like 60 times in a row, and it was the most compelling thing I'd ever heard on a record. You know, it's really funny: I'm on the inside looking out, while I'm on the outside looking in at the same time. And that's what keeps it so magical to me. I don't take it for granted, believe me I don't. There are people that have been following this band for years, and their acceptance [of the current lineup] is as important to me than anything I can think of.

.....

All famous bands have two things in common: All experience great highs, and all are privy to the lowest of lows. It is how they maneuver over them and through them that sets successful bands apart from their antitheses. The number of fans and the numbers in album sales don't always equate to true success in the music business. It is a healthier ideology to conclude that success as a professional musical entity really comes from how it survives while putting the importance of the music over the importance of the machine. Canned Heat are the dictionary definition of just that. With the resurrected success of the band, and the accomplishments of their new album, *Finyl Vinyl*, it is quite evident that good and better things eventually come to those who deserve it. And if you don't have the opportunity to immerse yourself in their new music, simply open a can of Sterno and set it on fire; it would quite possibly be the next best thing.

CANNED HEAT SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Current market value for records in Near Mint condition

LPs

ACCORD
- SN-7144 Captured Live (1981) $25.00

ATLANTIC
- SD 7289 One More River to Cross (1973) $15.00

CLEOPATRA
- CLP 1790 Live at Topanga Corral (2014) $25.00

DALI
- DCLP-89022 Reheated (1990) $25.00

JANUS
- JLS-3009 Vintage Canned Heat (1969) $40.00

LIBERTY
- 35002 Hooker 'n' Heat (1971) $60.00
- LN-10105 Boogie with Canned Heat (1981) $25.00
- LN-10106 Canned Heat Cook Book (The Best of Canned Heat) (1981) $25.00
- LRP-3526 Canned Heat (1967) $100.00
- LRP-3541 Boogie with Canned Heat (1968) $150.00
- LST-7526 Canned Heat (1967) $75.00
- LST-7541 Boogie With Canned Heat (1968) 75.00
- LST-7618 Hallelujah (1969) $75.00
- LST-11000 Canned Heat Cook Book (The Best of Canned Heat) (1969) $60.00
- LST-11002 Future Blues (1970) $50.00
- LST-27200 Living the Blues (1968) $50.00

PICKWICK
- SPC-3364 Live at Topanga Canyon (1970s) $25.00
- SPC-3614 Boogie (1978) $25.00

RHINO
- RNLP-801 John Lee Hooker and Canned Heat- Recorded Live at the Fox Venice Theatre (1985) $20.00
- RNDA-71105 Infinite Boogie (1987) $20.00

SCEPTER CITATION
- CTN-18017 The Best of Canned Heat (1972) $25.00

SUNSET
- SUS-5298, Collage (1971) $35.00

TAKOMA
- 7066 The Human Condition (1980) $30.00

UNITED ARTISTS
- UAS-5509 Canned Heat Concert (Recorded Live in Europe) (1971) $40.00
- UAS-5557 Historical Figures and Ancient Heads (1972) $40.00
- UAS-9955 Living the Blues (1971) $35.00
- UA-LA049-F The New Age (1973) $35.00
- LM-1015 Boogie with Canned Heat (1980) $25.00

WAND
- WDS-693 Live at Topanga Canyon (1970) $30.00

GOLDMINE WAS GRACIOUSLY INVITED INTO THE MINDS AND MEMORIES OF **JOHN SEBASTIAN**, **FITO DE LA PARRA**, **HARVEY MANDEL** AND **SKIP TAYLOR** AS WE WALK WITH THEM DOWN MEMORY LANE ABOUT A LITTLE SHOW IN UPSTATE NEW YORK, 55 YEARS AGO.

WOOD

Memoirs of the Greatest Show on Earth

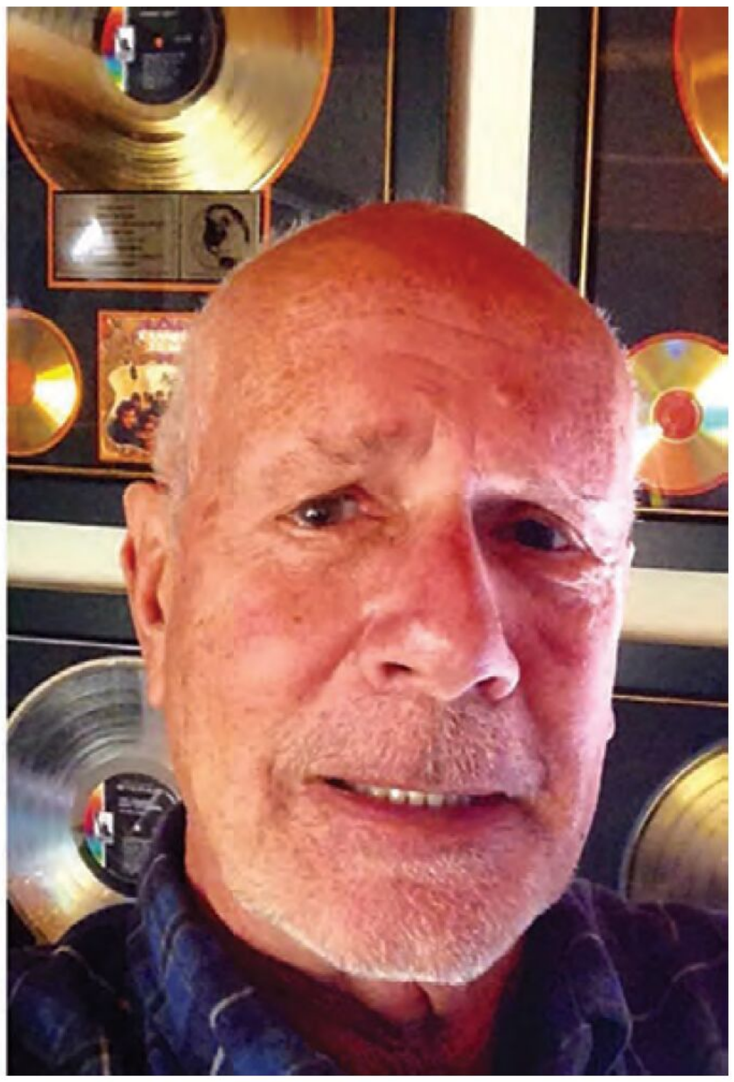
Singer Grace Slick performs with Jefferson Airplane at Woodstock.

GETTY IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

STOCK

The music world boasts quite the list of monumental, iconic and legendary live music events throughout the annals of recorded music history. Almost every genre of music can attach itself to legacy performances that have been documented, awed at and revered throughout time, most predominantly over the past 75 years. We can lend praise and acknowledgment to a great variety of legendary musical experiences, but there will always be those select few that register higher in stature than others, whether they've become famous ... or infamous. No musical experience within this lexicon has come close to the revere, the level of cultural influence, the spirit of unity and musical iconography, more than the event in 1969 Bethel, New York, called The Woodstock Music & Arts Festival, simply and more affectionately known to the world as Woodstock.

Join *Goldmine* as we celebrate the 55th anniversary of this legendary event, and journey back to the past, by the memoirs of four iconic figures from the classic era of music, who played the stage, walked the grounds and experienced the experience, all in real time, over a half century ago.



Skip Taylor

(Founder, manager and producer for Canned Heat)

GOLDMINE: *Skip, tell us about the important events that lead up to Canned Heat's participation at Woodstock, including Harvey Mandel in the lineup versus Henry Vestine's original departure.*

SKIP TAYLOR: About two or three weeks before Woodstock, the band was playing a gig at The Fillmore West in San Francisco. There was a lot of tension between Larry Taylor and Henry Vestine, who had a little battle while at the venue. That is the point in time that Henry got fed up and quit. So, for the first performance at the Fillmore we had Mike Bloomfield playing with us, who had just come off the road with the Paul Butterfield Blues Band. After the first set, we asked him if he would like to join the band, and he said, "No. I'm done playing for a while, I'm burned out." Sitting in the dressing room at the same time was Harvey Mandel. So, we asked him if he wanted to sit in and play the second show, and he said, "Absolutely, I'll do that." He was familiar with Canned Heat and the music enough that he got up there and played his ass off! After the show we asked if he wanted to be in the band and said that we were leaving for the East Coast the next day. He said, "Sure, I'll go!" and off we went, and off we took him with us.

GM: *So, you got to the East Coast the next day. How did everything transpire from that point?*

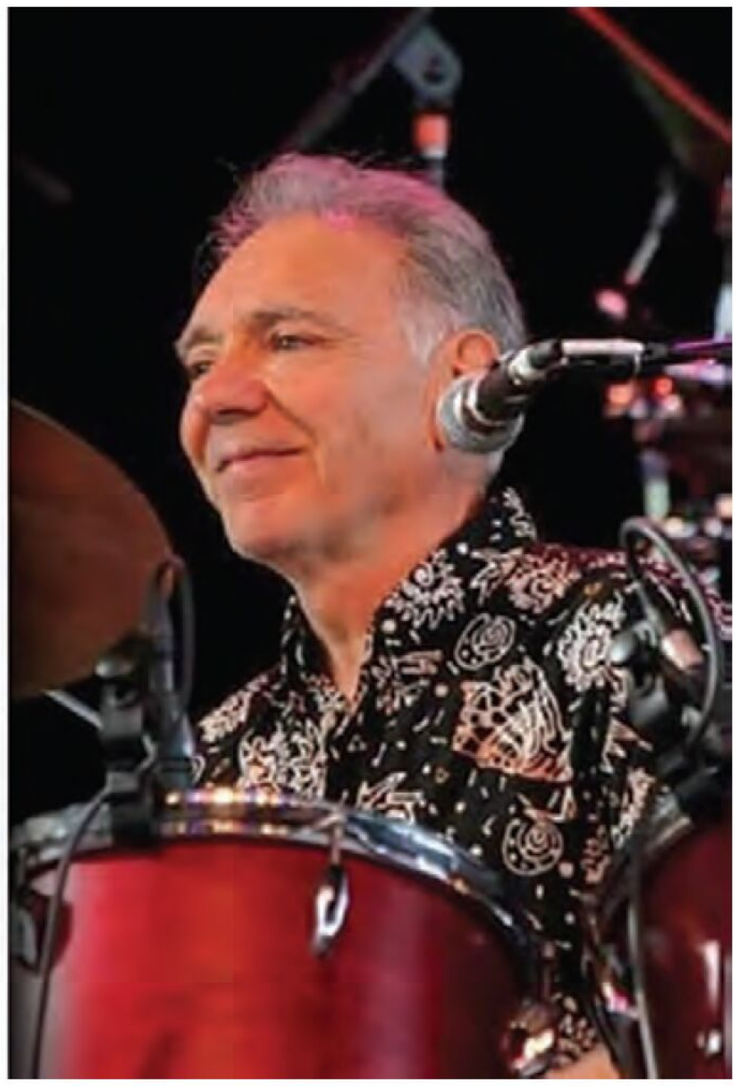
ST: Well, we had a few shows planned on the East Coast. We played The Fillmore East, headlining, with Three Dog Night and Santana opening for us. Then, we were supposed to play a big show at Hunter College that weekend [of Woodstock] with The Allman Brothers. Our agent was Jonny Podell, who was booking Canned Heat and The Allman Brothers at the time. So, the Wednesday before, Jonny calls me to meet with him, and he said, "A big show is happening this weekend up state, it's called Woodstock, and I want you to go meet the two guys that are doing it, because I can book Canned Heat." Mind you, 'Going Up the Country' was being freshly played on the radio on the East Coast, right at that time. So, we went and met with Artie Kornfeld and Michael Lange, and we talked. They said they wanted Canned Heat, and that they would make us the highest paid act. I told them about the conflicting Hunter College show and said that I would have to try and get us out of it. The other thing they wanted to do was film all the bands, and that we would need to do a contract, and asked if I had any experience with that. I told them that we did something like that with Lou Adler for The Monterey Pop Festival, and I could draw up something with all 'my' stipulations and give it to them. They said, "Let's do it, and let us know about Hunter College," though I didn't know how I was going to get out of the Hunter College thing. When I returned to the hotel, out of nowhere the phone rang and it was the guy from Hunter College. He says, "Hey, there's this big festival happening this weekend, we can't do the date. You can keep the deposit and we'll make the date for another time." I immediately called Podell and said, "Tell them we're on!"

GM: *What was it like trekking up to the site of the event in such a short amount of time? Can you describe the journey?*

ST: We were all set to go. I sent our roadies in the truck ahead of us, because we always carried a massive amount of equipment, and I'd watched [on TV] the day before what was happening on the roads, and it was just a nightmare. There was no way that the band was going to be able to drive there. So, I called a girlfriend of mine whose father was the CEO for American Airlines, and I told her my predicament, and she said, "Let me ask my dad to see what he can do to help." He called me back and said, "I've got you two 3-seater single engine planes out in Linden, New Jersey, that can fly you up to the closest airport." I knew this would work for us, but I didn't even tell the guys what we were doing. (laughs) In fact, in Fito's book [*Living the Blues*], I had to wake him up in the morning and tell him, "Come on! We're going to Woodstock." I turned on the TV and on every channel it was about Woodstock, saying the roads were clogged and they'd already broken down the fence and it was going to end up being a free festival. So, we made our way over to Linden, and Bob Hite [The Bear] said, "I'm never getting on that fu**ing plane," and Larry [Taylor] didn't want to get on either. He was scared of planes anyway. But I finally got two of them in one, and three of them in the other, and we flew up to the nearest airport closest to the festival. When we landed, there were all kinds of reporters, photographers,

doctors and nurses at this airport. Now, Alan had this acid — I took a tab, Alan took a tab, Bob took a tab, Larry didn't and Fito didn't ... Oh, Harvey did also. And we sat there at the airport, on acid, for about four or five hours, while helicopters kept coming and taking doctors and nurses to the site. Finally, all of them had left, and a big Army helicopter landed, and we grabbed our bags and started for the helicopter, and suddenly, all these reporters and photographers started running ahead of us toward the helicopter, and Bob was furious, he was crazy. He grabbed one of these reporters and said, "Where the hell do you think you're going?" The guy said, "We're going to report the news!" Bob grabbed this guy, and pulled him out of the helicopter and said, "We're going to make the news," and then the rest of them got out of the helicopter and we got in.

GM: *What was it like for you, finally flying into the venue up to the time the band performed?*
ST: I had gotten a camera from my uncle who ran a place called The Camera Barn on Broadway in New York, this new Pentax camera. While we were in the helicopter, I started loading this role of film, though I really didn't know what I was doing. Then, suddenly, we came flying over this one hill and there were half a million people there. It was like, "What the hell is that?" I pulled my camera out, and I took a bunch of pictures. I took the whole roll as we flew in and landed behind the stage. I will tell you also, that out of the pictures I took from the air, I sold one of them to Liberty Records and it became the front cover for Ravi Shankar's ... *At the Woodstock Festival* album. Anyway, as we were landing, I looked over amazed, and I see the truck with the roadies and our gear pulling behind the stage. It took them 12 hours to get there. We get off the helicopter and the festival announcer, Chip Monck, came up to me and says, "When do you want the band to go on?" I looked over and there was the sun just setting, and to me that is the most magical time to play a festival. I said, "We're ready, how about now?" We were all blitz, but we had our gear right there, and a great sunset, and I said, "Let's go!" And that was it, man.



Fito de la Parra

(Canned Heat drummer, producer, bandleader)

GOLDMINE: *I discussed this with Skip, but from your own recollection, how did you learn that you would be doing this upcoming festival called Woodstock?*
FITO DE LA PARRA: Skip probably told you, but I really didn't know anything about it, even until the night before Woodstock. We were in New York to play The Fillmore East and then that Hunter College show. Anyway, I really didn't know anything about doing this Woodstock festival until the actual day of. I actually mentioned that in my book, that I was sleeping, and I was very tired and upset, because there were these problems with the band, with Henry's quitting, and that's when Skip Taylor came to my room in the morning and said, "This is going to be the biggest gig of you've ever played!" Finally, he physically pulls me out of bed and tells me to listen to the radio and the TV, and about what is going on there, and then I did. I put on my clothes, my T-shirt and my Levis, and stored a couple of joints in my drumstick bag and we took off for the festival.

GM: *Were any of you aware, at all, just how large this festival was going to be? Or was it a total surprise?*
FDLP: Well, by the time Skip came into my room ... remember, that was on Saturday, I think it was already the second day of the festival, but still, I don't think any of us really knew. However, of course, I confirmed it later when we were flying in, on the helicopter, and we saw ridiculously massive amounts of people all over. That's when Skip pulls out his camera and starts shooting the event from the sky, and of course, as you know, one of those photos ended up being the album cover for the Ravi Shankar Woodstock album.

GM: *We would love to hear more about the journey to the festival that day, from your perspective. Do you remember much about that?*
FDLP: You know, I really don't recall too much about that, because I was pretty exhausted from being on the road. I do recall the Bob Hite's helicopter incident because it was so funny. I know we took a small plane to Wallkill [New York], but I don't recall where we caught the plane, maybe New Jersey. But I do remember that I was laying on the tarmac at the airport using my drumstick bag as a pillow, and I was just laying there trying to take a nap. That is when we saw that the final helicopter arrived. Skip says it was an official Army helicopter, but I don't remember that. I could have sworn it

was a normal chartered helicopter, only because I saw the journalists and photographers headed for it, and then Bob and the rest of us going after them. That is of course when the infamous story of Bob Hite and the journalist happened. When he asked where the guy thought he was going, and the journalist said, "We're going to report the news," and Bob famously says, "We're going to make the news," and then pulled them out. That was a great thing to do. (laughs) Then we took off, and as we were flying into the show, I was very happy that we were there. Even better was seeing our roadies literally arriving at the same time we did. They drove for 12 or 13 hours, asking fans on the road to help them by moving their cars out of the way. That gave me confidence when we arrived. Skip was right — this was going to be the biggest gig ever.

GM: *After getting up there on that stage, having performed many shows in your career at that time, what was your feeling when seeing a half million people from that vantage point?*

FDLP: Again, I was very happy because we were actually ready to go. The Incredible String Band, from the U.K., was playing before us, and they were really mellow, and the crowd wasn't really giving them a response, so I knew they were ready for the energy that we were going to give them. Then when we got up there, and it was just another perspective of that mass of people, people climbing on the towers, even though they were telling them to get down, and things like that. It could have all been very dangerous, it could have been a tragedy, like another Altamont, but it wasn't, it all worked out. It was sort of like an organized anarchy in a way, but everyone was helping each other — so much bad stuff could have happened, that didn't happen.

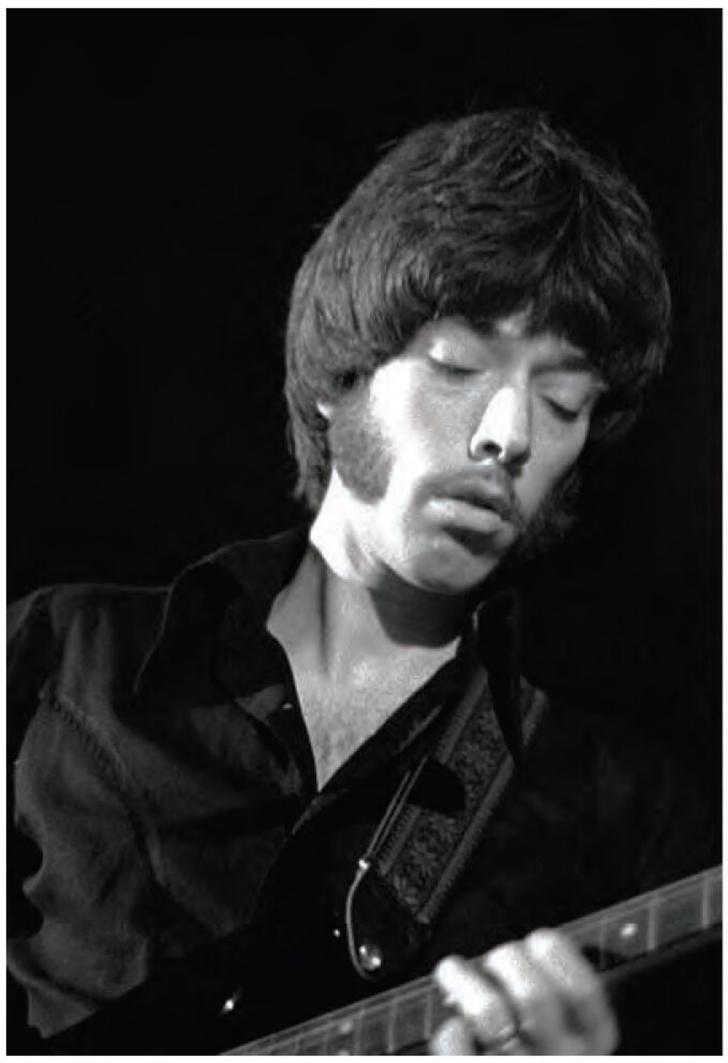
GM: *What were the most outrageous things you experienced while at Woodstock?*

FDLP: Remember, we weren't there for that long. We weren't going to stick around too much after we were done playing. One thing I remember is looking over at the side of the stage, at my manager [Skip Taylor], high on acid, signing contracts for the Woodstock film, while we were playing. Another episode was that fan who jumped up on the stage and got a cigarette from Bob. You know, Bob always had his Marlboros in his pocket. One of the roadies came to intervene, but Bob said to leave him be. The guy puts his arm around Bob, Bob pulls out a cigarette, and they smoke it onstage while we're performing. You can see that in the director's cut of the Woodstock film. Also, when we were trying to leave, we hijacked a limousine. The driver left the keys in it. Skip said, "We are going to have to take that, and get out of here, and go to the hotel." We figured we'd call later and let them know where the limousine was. Then Felix Pappalardi from the band Mountain, saw us and yelled, "Hey guys, give me a ride!" and so he hopped in, too. Then, at the hotel, we didn't have reservations. They said they had reservations for a band called Big Brother and the Holding Company, and we said, "We are Big Brother!" We were pretty bad.

> **When we were trying to leave, we hijacked a limousine. The driver left the keys in it. Skip said, 'We are going to have to take that, and get out of here, and go to the hotel.' We figured we'd call later and let them know where the limousine was.**
>
> — FITO DE LA PARRA ON STEALING A LIMOUSINE

People on their way to the Woodstock Music Festival, 1969.

OWEN FRANKEN/GETTY IMAGES



Harvey Mandel

(Canned Heat guitarist — Also performed with John Mayall, The Rolling Stones, Charlie Musselwhite)

GOLDMINE: *Harvey, can you recall for us the night at The Fillmore West, when you sat in with Canned Heat, and you were asked to join the band?*

HARVEY MANDEL: I was actually just out goofing around with friends that night. We went by there. I didn't even know Canned Heat was playing that night until we got there. So, we were hanging out and some people ran up to me and said, "Hey, 'The Bear' [Bob Hite] wants to see you in the back, he knows you're here." I went back there and learned that Larry Taylor and Henry Vestine had just had a big fight, and Henry quit the band; he just walked off. So, now they had no guitarist. I guess Mike Bloomfield sat in the first set, and I was asked to sit in the second set, and it worked really well, so at the end of the gig Bear asked me to join the band. The next night we left for the East Coast and just a few days later we were at Woodstock. I came in at the right time.

GM: *Can you describe your own recollections of what it was like between that time you arrived on the East Coast and actually getting to Woodstock?*

HM: Everything for me seemed pretty much normal, as far as touring and going to any other gig, except being shuffled into planes and then flying into the gig in a helicopter. Woodstock was such a big deal that they had to get us in by helicopter — there was no way to drive up there at all.

GM: *Was there any point in time while you were making that journey, that you said to yourself, "What the hell did I get myself into?"*

HM: No, not at all. It was all fun. We were having a great time. It was totally unbelievable, there were just hundreds of thousands of people. It wasn't like anything we'd ever seen, or anyone had ever seen up until that time. I may have felt a bit nervous but no more or less than I feel at any gig that I play. I always feel a bit nervous before I get up there and start playing. I was more excited and not believing that so many people had actually showed up for this show. I didn't realize how big of a deal it was while it was starting, until after.

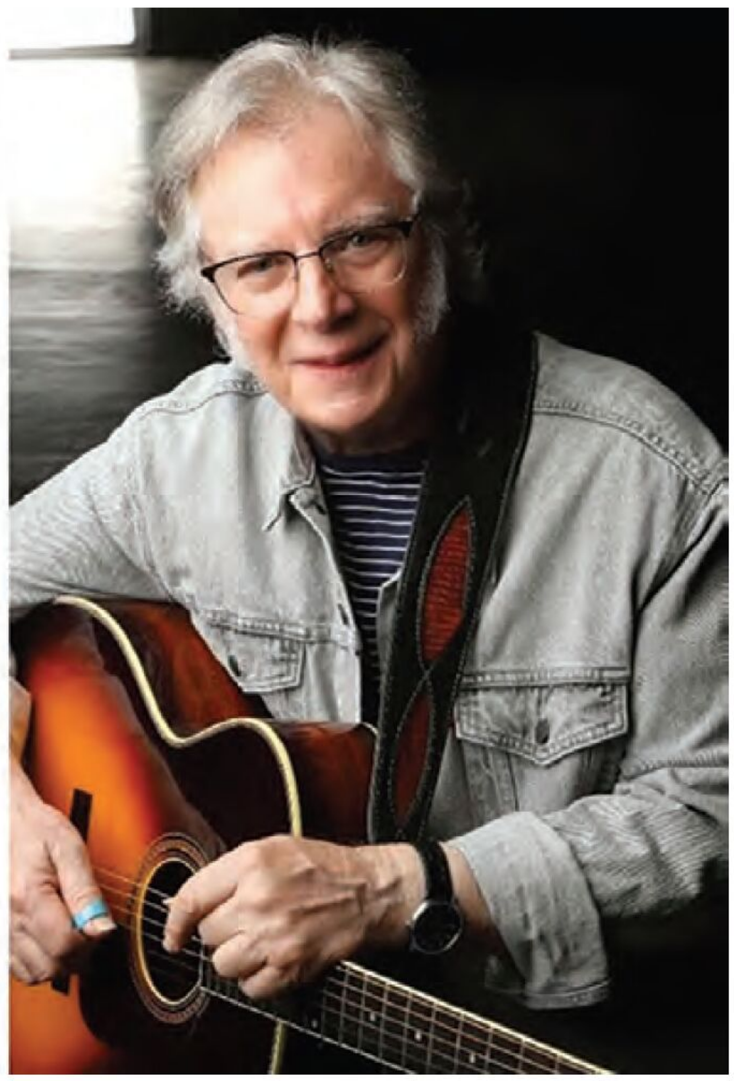
GM: *And so, seeing that size a crowd from the stage for the first time, what was going through your mind?*

HM: Well, again, exciting, and a little bit nerve-racking. The truth is then, when I would play, most of the time my eyes were closed. I'm just up there doing my thing with my eyes closed, I'm not even paying attention to all those people out there. If I did, I would drive myself crazy. But then of course I was more inexperienced. I've been on a million tours since then and now looking at the audience is fine. I like it. The Woodstock thing was something different. It was more a test than anything I'd experienced up to that point. It was unusual and I just went along with it.

"Bob was furious... He grabbed one of these reporters and said. 'Where the hell do you think you're going?' The guy said, 'We're going to report the news!' Bob grabbed this guy, and pulled him out of the helicopter and said, 'We're going to make the news!'"

— SKIP TAYLOR ON REMEMBERING BOB HITE

BILL EPPRIDGE, THE LIFE PICTURE COLLECTION, GETTY IMAGES



John Sebastian

(Rock and Roll Hall of Famer — The Lovin' Spoonful and Grammy Award Winning solo artist)

GOLDMINE: *John, you weren't originally on the bill as a performer. In actuality, you were initially at Woodstock as a spectator. Tell us about that?*

JOHN SEBASTIAN: I was there because my friend, Paul Rothchild [music producer], said to me at a certain point, there is going to be this big show, right now it is supposed to be in Woodstock, New York, and it sounds like something you should go to. Now, I had been following Paul Rothchild around for about a year, sort of like his "mini-me" in some ways, and I learned an awful lot from him in the process, and it was because that he suggested it, is what sent me to the Albany airport. By this amazing coincidence, the guy that was loading up all the instruments for The Incredible String Band, just happened to be the roadie for The Lovin' Spoonful, from the beginning. So, I saw the helicopter, and as I got closer, I said, "Oh my God, it's Walter Gundy." I started gesturing to him, and he kind of waved me around to go onto the airfield, which I did, and that's basically how I got on the helicopter and was on my way to Woodstock.

GM: *On the day you performed, it was raining, and Santana couldn't set their gear up in the rain. You were asked, impromptu, to perform your acoustic set in their place. Can you recall that for us?*

JS: So, I was already hanging around onstage and the stage area, but for the first hours that I was there, I spent circumventing the Woodstock field area with my friend, David Brown, the bass player for Santana. There were so many of my peers and friends near the stage that I'd been going up and down the stage stairs a bunch of times. By this time, I was pretty much on the stage, standing there, listening to Chip Monck [announcer] and Michael Lang [promoter] talking about this Santana dilemma. I was looking out into the crowd at the time, and I don't remember who was saying which, but one of them says, "We can't put any electric stuff on the stage right now, we've got to find someone who can hold them [the crowd] with one acoustic guitar." Then the other one says, "Yeah, and if we could find him, that guy would probably be good if he had a couple of hits." Now, I was looking out at the crowd with these guys right behind me, and I was thinking to myself, "Yep, that's pretty much what you would need." Then, I turn around and they're both looking right at me. I didn't get it until I turned around and looked at them, and realized they were talking about me. (laughs) I said, "I don't have an instrument, I didn't

"One of the things that was particularly wonderful was playing the 'Trips Tent'—going and playing for the folks that were having a bad trip ... I felt like this was the most wonderful moment, something positive I could contribute and so, there it was, and that's what I did."

— JOHN SEBASTIAN
ON PLAYING FOR HIGH PEOPLE

bring any with me." Then Chip Monck in his chipmunk voice says, "Well, you've got several minutes to find one." Then I run down to the undercarriage of the stage and there was Tim Hardin, who had already finished his set, and I asked him to borrow his Harmony Sovereign guitar, and he said, "Why *suuure*." I headed back up, checking the tuning while running up the stairs, and that is how I started my set.

GM: *I realize that this is probably a somewhat cliché and repetitive question for you, but describe some unique feelings of standing there, staring out into a half million people playing your music.*

JS: Well, you're right, I've probably been asked this as many times as Carl Perkins has been asked how he wrote "Blue Suede Shoes," but what can I say? I mean, it was wonderful, yes, and I was ready ... I'd been playing in front of crowds, but this 500,000 was a strangely intimate crowd. Half a million people. I don't know why it was intimate, but it was, and I felt it immediately as I got onstage. And you had to get over any kind of overt feeling of, "Oh geez, this is so amazing," because, sorry, you don't have time to be amazed right now.

GM: *Did you at least have previous set list in mind, or what your song sequence totally spontaneous?*

JS: No! Please. (laughs) I was not prepared to go on. In fact, I was really not prepared to go on. I didn't have a set list, but what was my job? My life was figuring out how to do seven or eight tunes for somebody, so that I might get a little coin in the basket.

GM: *Aside from your performance, what was one thing that was the most uniquely memorable, for you, at Woodstock?*

JS: One of the things that was particularly wonderful was playing the "Trips Tent"—going and playing for the folks that were having a bad trip. I don't know whether he was already there or showed up a few minutes later, but Rick Danko [The Band] was there, someone who I'd already played music with many times. So, we had no problem coming up with tunes, and keeping them kind of mellow, not playing anything too scary, so as not to make people's bad trips even worse. I felt like this was the most wonderful moment, something positive I could contribute and so, there it was, and that's what I did.

HENRY DILTZ

BARON WOLMAN, THE MUSEUM AT BETHEL WOODS VIA REUTERS

MISSING MELANIE

AFTER **MELANIE SAFKA**'S UNTIMELY PASSING EARLIER THIS YEAR, THE STAFF AT *GOLDMINE* HELD A VIGIL OF SORTS, PLAYING HER SONGS THROUGH THE NIGHT. THEN WE GOT TOGETHER THE NEXT DAY AND CREATED THIS TRIBUTE ARTICLE.

Melanie performing at the Woodstock 20th anniversary concert in 1989.

SCOTT GARDNER/TORONTO STAR VIA GETTY IMAGES

It has been described as one of the most significant reissue campaigns of recent years, and it's hard to argue. Whereas other artists' archives are drip fed to the public over a number of years, Cleopatra Records in the U.S. and Easy Action (U.K.) are aiming to restore Melanie's entire 1971-2023 catalog to the shelves within the next 12 months. In fact, the process has already started, with the appearance of 1984's *One Night Only* live album at the end of the year.

The campaign is being overseen by *Goldmine* stalwart Dave Thompson, Melanie's manager across the last months of her life, and he explains, "About a year ago, Melanie and I first started talking about how her catalog ought to be presented, going through every album one by one, picking bonus tracks and artwork, what the liner notes should say, everything.

"At the time, it was just a bit of fun, but then I started talking to labels and suddenly it was reality. And we had just got started when Melanie passed away [on January 23 this year], and I was worried that things might change. But no, both labels were adamant, we're sticking to what Melanie wanted. So by this time next year, everything from that period will be available again, including a few albums that only the fan club or gig-goers ever had a chance to buy, and a ton of unreleased material as well."

That promise has already been met via the release in April of *From the Banks of the River Effra - Crystal Palace 1972*, capturing Melanie's performance at that year's Crystal Palace Garden Party in London. It's a limited edition of 300 CDs and 150 vinyl records, with the latter designed to resemble an early 1970s bootleg.

Thompson continues, "Talking with Melanie one time, she mentioned that she'd never had a 'proper' bootleg. There's been a lot of unauthorized CDs and MP3s floating around, and back in the day there were some cassettes — in fact, *Crystal Palace* was the first Melanie boot I ever bought, from a street market in London around 1976. But there was never a vinyl bootleg, so I suggested to Cleopatra that we make her wish come true, and they did it."

Even more exciting is the 6-CD box set coming later this summer from Easy

Melanie performing circa 1969.

DAVID REDFERN/REDFERNS

Action. Over 100 tracks take us from a demo recorded in 1965 through to a spectacular radio broadcast from 1978, with acetates, demos, outtakes, live recordings and broadcast material delivering a portrait of Melanie not as the hippy chick purveyor of "Brand New Key" (we don't even hear the song until disc 5) but as one of the most remarkable songwriters and individual vocalists of her era.

Catch the 1970 Dutch broadcast with the Edwin Hawkins Singers in full cry behind her, but still unable to compete with the sheer power of Melanie's voice; and elsewhere, a late 1969 version of the same song, "Lay Down (Candles in the Rain)," allows us to hear i*t before* she added that so memorable chorus.

Easy Action's Carlton Sandercock describes *Neighbourhood Songs* as one of the most ambitious (not to mention time consuming) projects he has ever been involved with, but that, too, was in accordance with Melanie's wishes.

"I think, when the subject of a box set first came up, Melanie was a little iffy about it. For a variety of reasons, few of which were in her hands, she's suffered so many compilations, 'best-ofs,' and so on over the years. But we talked and I told her about the work I've done with the Marc Bolan and Stooges catalogs, hunting down things that the majority of people have never heard, or that they *need* to hear, and making them look as good as we can. And she agreed, because that's the approach she wanted to take. In fact, a lot of the performances on the box set were her own suggestions."

Easy Action is handling Melanie's 1970s output between 1972's *Stoneground Words* and up through 1978 *Ballroom Streets* LP (her earlier material, for Buddah, is largely owned by Sony); Cleopatra is overseeing the remainder of the catalog, and already some half a dozen albums have been restored to daylight — more will appear throughout 2024.

Joining these will be further releases devoted wholly to unreleased material. Thompson says, "We have literally hundreds of hours of tape, which we're in the process of digitizing and listening to, and it's great because, aside from everything Melanie had, we've also been given an incredible amount of help by fans and collectors — who, of course, often own stuff that the artist themself had forgotten about.

"This is especially true of live recordings, but great swaths of Melanie's

A young Melanie begins her performance with the Edwin Hawkins Singers right behind her.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

archive was in disarray, with tapes being stolen from lock-up facilities, given away to friends, lost in moves ... you name it, it probably happened. But now a lot of it is coming back, and there's some amazing music there."

What discoveries, then, is Thompson himself most excited about? *"Crystal Palace*, of course. But we also have a snatch of a song that Melanie wrote back in the 1990s ... she was recording at a little studio in the middle of nowhere, it was three in the morning, and all of a sudden two cars pulled up in the parking lot and a bunch of really sketchy-looking characters got out. The studio owner just picked up the phone and called his wife, in another part of the house, and said, 'Cleona, get the gun.'

"That became the name of the song, but Melanie never completed much more than the chorus, never did anything with it apart from once, when she and Beau Jarred [her son and longtime producer and accompanist] were testing something in the studio, and she started messing around with it. Completely by chance Beau recorded it, and we have it as a bonus track on the album she was recording at the time, *Lowcountry*. I was so happy when I received the call from Beau saying he'd found it."

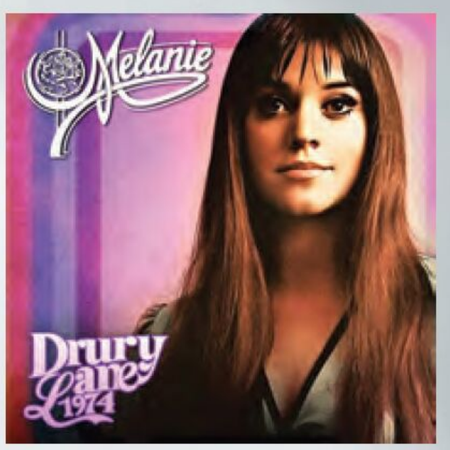
Goldmine itself is releasing an exclusive 7-inch sample of Melanie's *Songs I Sang at Woodstock*. The never-issued-on-vinyl recording is an acoustic replaying of her setlist from the iconic 1969 festival. Limited to 100 copies, it will be pressed on turquoise vinyl and available at *Shop.GoldmineMag.com*.

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

MELANIE SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Current market value for records in Near Mint condition

ALBUMS



ABC
- ABND 879 From the Beginning/Twelve Great Performances (1975) $15.00

AMHERST
- Amherst AMH 3302 Am I Real or What (1985) $20.00

ATLANTIC
- SD 18190 Photograph (1976) $30.00

BLANCHE
- BL 6177 Arabesque (1982) $20.00

BUDDAH
- BDS 5024 Born to Be (1968) $30.00
- BDS 5041 Melanie (1969) $15.00
- BDS 5060 Candles in the Rain (1970) $15.00
- BDS 5066 Leftover Wine (1970) $20.00
- BDS 5074 My First Album (1971) $15.00
- BDS 5095 Garden in the City (1972) $20.00
- BDS 5132 Please Love Me (1973) $15.00
- BDS 95000 The Good Book (1971) $30.00
- BDS 95005 Four Sides of Melanie (1972) $25.00
- 2318 089 (Germany) In Concert - Live at Montreux (1973) $50

CLEOPATRA
- CLO 5490LP Drury Lane 1974 2-LP (forthcoming)
- CLO 5512LP One Night Only - The Eagle Mountain House 1984 (2023) $30 —Gold Vinyl
- CLO 5524LP Central Park 1974 (2024) $50 —Pink Vinyl
- CLO 5535LP From the Banks of the River Effra-Crystal Palace 1972 (2024) $30
- CLO 5542LP The Magic Bus Sessions 1972 (2024) $30 — Gold Vinyl
- CLO 5543LP Arabesque (2024) $30 —Cherry Pink Vinyl
- CLO 5593LP Live at Montreux Jazz Festival (2024) $30 —Silver Vinyl
- CLO 5598LP Victim of the Moon (forthcoming)
- CLO 5777LP Am I Real or What (forthcoming)
- CLO 5808LP Ever Since You Never Heard Of Me (forthcoming)
- CLO 5908LP Old Bitch Warrior (forthcoming)
- CLO5854LP Lowcountry (forthcoming)

CNR BENELUX
- 656-097 (Benelux) Melanie (1987) $40

EASY ACTION/THE WINTER GARDEN
- NERE 003 LP Stoneground Words Double Deluxe Edition (2024) $40 — Dusky Pink Vinyl
- NERE 004 LP Autumn Lady (forthcoming)
- NERE 005 LP Sunset & Other Beginnings 2-LP (forthcoming)
- NERE 006 LP Photograph 2-LP (forthcoming)
- NERE 007 LP Phonogenic: Not Just Another Pretty Face (forthcoming)
- NERE 008 LP Ballroom Streets (forthcoming) — Mustard Vinyl
- NERE 009 LP Melanie at Carnegie Hall 1973 (forthcoming)
- NERE 011 LP Close To It All (forthcoming)
- NERE 012 LP Visit My Dreams 2-LP (forthcoming)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT
- GRUB 12 (U.K.) Cowabonga - Never Turn Your Back on a Wave (1989) $30

MIDSONG
- MCA 3033 Phonogenic: Not Just Another Pretty Face (1978) $15.00

NEIGHBORHOOD
- 3000 As I See It Now (1974) $15.00
- 3001 Sunset and Other Beginnings (1975) $20.00
- 47001 Gather Me (1971) $30.00
- 47005 Stoneground Words (1972) $20.00
- 48001 Madrugada (1974) $15.00
- 9001 Melanie at Carnegie Hall (1973) $20.00

NEIGHBOURHOOD (U.K.)
- NBL 100 Seventh Wave (1983) $20 —Blue Cover
- NBL 100 Seventh Wave (1983) $10 —Photo Cover

SELF RELEASED NO CAT
- Ever Since You Never Heard of Me (2010) $300 —Purple Vinyl

TOMATO
- TOM-2- 9003 Ballroom Streets (1979) $25.00

Melanie Top 10 Rarities

- LP *Stoneground Words* (First Japanese Pressing w/Obi). $500
- LP *Ever Since You Never Heard of Me* (Purple Vinyl, Signed) $300
- 45 "My Beautiful People" (First Columbia Promo with Picture Sleeve) $300
- Bell Sounds Studio Acetate 1968 $250
- German 8-LP Box Set (Buddah Zweitausendeins 57.001-8) $200
- LP *Live At Montreux* (Yugoslavia Pressing) $125
- EMI "Let It Flow" Acetate 1972 $100
- 45 "To Be a Star"//"Window Pane" (Dutch Single, Picture Sleeve) $100
- *You Never Heard of Me* Test Pressing $75
- LP *Sunset and Other Beginnings: Historia De La Music Rock* Reissue (Germany) $80

Gruen's World

Photographer Bob Gruen attends the launch of the "Legendary Moments" exhibition by Bob Gruen and Leee Black Childers, curated by Stephen Colegrave, at D'Stassi Art on July 29, 2022, in London, England.

DAVID M. BENETT/DAVE BENETT/GETTY IMAGES FOR D'STASSI ART

PHOTOGRAPHER BOB GRUEN HAS TAKEN SOME OF ROCK AND ROLL'S MOST ICONIC PHOTOGRAPHS. THE FOLLOWING INTERVIEW CAPTURES THE STORIES BEHIND THE LENS. BY IVOR LEVENE

Here at *Goldmine* magazine, we have a tradition of working with music's most prolific photographers, the unsung heroes of the music scene. Without their work, we wouldn't be selling magazines; nobody wants a story without an accompanying photo. In the days before multimedia and social media, the only thing we knew about the look of a band is what rock photographers showed us. Nobody had

to imagine what it would have been like to attend, say, a Led Zeppelin concert; we have the photos. There are as many photos of bands as there are bands. But there is within this group of photographers, an almost "elite" squadron of them, famous to a degree, if you will. Sometimes a photographer isn't just someone being in the right place at the right time, simply pushing a button and hoping for the best. There is thought, purpose, a sense of what the photographer and, in some cases, what the band are trying to convey.

The association between a photographer and an event or a specific artist is an unbreakable bond, both from a pictorial point and a personal point. You simply cannot think of Woodstock without thinking of Henry Diltz. You cannot think of Bruce Springsteen without thinking of Frank Stefanko. And there is one artist we can all probably agree held something special in our hearts, and that artist is John Lennon. He helped start the biggest band in the history of music, his journey was tumultuous and filled with highs and lows, and he was taken from us much too soon. Much has been written about him, most of it by outsiders. Fortunately however, there was someone who was there in what some consider to be Lennon's most creative and introspective period, which is the time after the breakup of The Beatles until his assassination in 1980. That "someone" is photographer Bob Gruen. Were it not for Gruen, we would know so much less about the Lennons that it would seem more a mystery than what it is. Because of Bob Gruen, we were brought into John and Yoko's world, and our world is a better place for it. Gruen is an integral part of music; in fact, it could be said that Gruen helped create and define "rock photography."

Of course, associating Bob Gruen with John and Yoko only would be like saying that Michealangelo painted a church. The Lower East Side of New York City was one of this country's most prolific breeding grounds in the 1970s. The Ramones, Talking Heads, Blondie, NYC punk, CBGB. Gruen was there from the beginning to document it all for us. Gruen established and maintained personal relationships with many of the artists he was associated with, due to not only the quality of his work, but the quality of his personality. Unobtrusive, easygoing, ingratiating. These are all terms that have been heard associated with him. Musicians seemed to be almost drawn to him, and in turn they showed him a side of themselves that was rarely shown to the fans. In the following interview, Gruen will show us a side of Ike Turner that almost nobody knows, a caring side that isn't generally written about. And we all know there are always more than two sides to a story. There are three people in every photograph: the subject, the photographer and the viewer. In Gruen's case, the viewer is taken on a journey inside the artist's life; we find out what really made them tick.

We were lucky enough to pair up with Gruen for this summer's edition of *Goldmine* and get even more information. Come along on a ride with us as we discuss some of the most important reflections of an important time in rock music.

GOLDMINE: *What initially sparked your interest in rock photography? I know that you originally started out shooting local news events and your family and that kind of thing. What inspired you to jump into rock photography?*

BOB GRUEN: Well, it wasn't a jump into rock photography because there was no genre called rock photography when I started doing it. It was not a category. The only photographer I knew who worked in music was a guy named Popsie [William Randolph], who used to be a roadie for, I think, Tommy Dorsey or Frank Sinatra, something like that, from the old days. And he would do studio publicity, pictures ... There was nobody following rock bands because there were no rock bands to follow. When I was growing up in the '50s, rock and roll was invented. I was 11 years old laying on my dad's stomach when we saw Elvis Presley on TV. And then along came Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley and Little Richard. And it wasn't until The Beatles that there were bands. The Beatles were one of the first bands that wrote their own songs.

And then there were The Rolling Stones. All of a sudden there was the whole English invasion, and then there were American bands. Before that, people hardly ever wrote their own songs. Buddy Holly wrote songs, but Elvis didn't. When I finished high school I tried to go to public colleges, but that didn't really work for me. I tried to get jobs, but I couldn't really do the nine-to-five job thing because I was more of a five-to-nine person. I'm more of a night person and I basically followed Timothy Leary's advice to turn on, tune in and drop out.

And I dropped out and lived with a rock and roll band. Because I just didn't like the idea of the nine-to-five job, and going to an office and doing paperwork for some other company that had nothing to do with my life. I tried to work. I had a job at the Nabisco corporation for a little while, but during my lunch hour, I would run over to Central Park because a guy named Zachary ran the Schaefer Music Festival stage in the afternoon. He would have local bands play. So I was always into kind of the music scene. In high school I was in the folk music club, but we didn't have a rock and roll club. That was unheard of. We had a folk music club and the theater club. I was in those clubs, more with the artistic people. Photography was always my hobby because I learned it from my mom. I was taking pictures of my family and pictures in the high school newspaper. And so I was taking pictures of my friends [in bands], and every time they exchanged drummers, it was a new band with a new name, and they needed a new picture to put in front of the horrible nightclub or bar that they were playing.

GM: *So what was your first professional gig?*

BG: It was with a band called The Glitterhouse. I met Bob Crewe of The Four Seasons, and he actually made an album for them. They used my pictures for the publicity kit. And that's how I met my first publicist in a record company in Atlantic Records. And then about a year later or so, my big break came in the summer of 1970. I saw Ike and Tina Turner and I took some pictures of that, and Tina just totally blew me away. I'd never seen anybody quite like that. It was amazing. They played a couple of shows around New York that week and the next day. I went to a place called the Honka Monka Room in Queens. A little bar, with a stage about a foot and a half high with Ike and Tina, the band with the horns and the dancers, The Ikettes. I mean everybody was on this little stage.

And I took a bunch of pictures that night—the first time I took pictures of a band that weren't my friends. And I got some really good ones. In fact, I got one of the best pictures I ever took at the end

10/30/74

Bob Gruen + John Lennon

N.Y.C. 8/74

Yoko + John Lennon at Hitfactory
Listening to 1st Cut on Air Broadcast
of "Starting Over" Single Photo by Bob Gruen

Polaroids taken during different photo sessions with John Lennon, including two that would become iconic New York City photos (above).

BOB GRUEN

Gruen set his camera for a one-second exposure and captured a multiple image of Tina Turner (at left) dancing offstage as a strobe light flashed at the Honka Monka Club in Queens, New York. And (below) Ike and Tina Turner at the International Youth Expo in the Bronx, New York, on July 5, 1971.

FRANK STEFANKO

of Tina's act — there was a strobe light flashing. I decided to open the camera for one second to see if I could catch several of the flashes. It only had a few frames left, but several of 'em were no good. But one of 'em was absolutely perfect. It captures Tina in motion. That one was really good. So a couple days later, we went to see them again in a theater in the round in New Jersey. And I brought some pictures with me to show to my friends that we were meeting there.

And as we were walking out, one of my friends saw Ike Turner walking from one trailer to another, and my friend literally pushed me in front of Ike and said, "Show Ike the pictures." He stopped and he said, "What pictures?" I showed him my photos, and he said, "This is a great picture. I gotta show these to Tina." He took me into the dressing room, and all of a sudden Tina was looking at my pictures and she was liking them. And I was having trouble breathing, not believing that I was there. And he said, "Meet me in New York." A couple of days later, he sent me over to a publicist at a record company. And that guy took me to a party where I met two other publicists, one of whom worked for Alice Cooper. The other one hired me to shoot Elton John on his first trip to New York. And things just started snowballing. And that's really when things started happening for me.

GM: *Did you have an "aha" moment where you thought, this is my destiny?*
BG: No, I've just been working my ass off trying to pay my rent all my life. Because like I said, it didn't have a title "rock photography." Nowadays it's a college course, which is hilarious to me because where I come from rock and roll was juvenile, the "JD music," juvenile delinquent music. It was a fad that was gonna pass away. That's what they said in the '50s. *Don't worry, it's just a fad the teenagers are into today, but it's gonna pass away.* Well, [Mick] Jagger's 80 and he's still dancing. Nothing's passed away.

Like I said, I didn't choose rock photography. It just kind of happened.

GM: *Putting people in the right locations for photographs. Was that something that happened organically or were you already developing a sense of composition?*
BG: I don't do a lot of pre-planning for my photos.

GM: *You just went wherever the gig was.*
BG: Have camera will travel, and I did like to travel. I enjoyed it when people would find me somewhere. I started flying with Alice Cooper, and then Elton John. I went on the plane with Led Zeppelin. That was fun. But the day I went with Led Zeppelin, Ahmet Ertegun was there, and some of the lawyers and managers. So it was not a wild ride. I didn't get in on the wild times with Led Zeppelin, which is maybe why I'm still alive.

I was active because I worked with everybody. I used to work for a company called Fania Records, which was The Latin All Stars. I did several album covers for them. The early disco records, all kinds of stuff. I took any job I could get. I still do.

GM: *So you never kept a wall between you and the band? You partook, so to speak, in a lot of what was going on back then?*
BG: Yes, if they were drinking, I was drinking. If they were smoking, I was smoking. I mean, I didn't get into heavy drugs at that point, but if somebody was smoking ... I learned early on that in court, if they have a picture of somebody in a compromised position, or they enter a picture in evidence in court, the photographer has to testify as to the authenticity of the photo. And so I never took any pictures of anybody taking any drugs. If anybody took any drugs, my camera went down because I never wanted to be the guy who had to testify that I saw that happening. So I don't have a roster of pictures of them with the big spliffs and stuff, or Keith Richards or somebody. I don't have pictures of anybody taking drugs. I might have joined in a little if they were smoking or something nice, but I didn't take pictures of it. The fans wanna see them. Of course the fans wanna see

BOB GRUEN

their rock stars smoking drugs. [But] I didn't ever want to incriminate anybody; it's not my job.

GM: *Going back to Ike and Tina [Turner], did you read Tina's book that came out in the '80s?*
BG: Well, I read both books, yes.

GM: *Did it change your opinion of Ike? You must have had a very positive opinion of Ike Turner because he opened so many doors for you.*
BG: He opened a lot of doors for me. Ike Turner was a very generous person. He opened doors for many people. He gave a lot of people whatever they needed whether it was advice, a job, a car, a house or helping someone get rid of a boyfriend or whatever it was. Ike was an amazing, wonderful guy who took way too much cocaine and turned into a monster as many cocaine freaks do. It is just a real shame because he was such a wonderful guy. Drugs can really destroy a mind. That's what happened with Ike Turner.

He wrote a book called *Takin' Back My Name*. It's a really good book about his life. He was a very smart guy, a very technical guy. When he would travel around, people would come and say, "I can build this kind of echo box or reverb box" ... or whatever kind of box they made for recording. So he would give the guy coke and keep him high. He'd take him back to Los Angeles until he could build whatever it was. Whenever he went to the studio, there was always some kid underneath the panel installing some new gadget that Ike was getting. He started out in Mississippi and he went to recording sessions and learned that the guy who was bringing him to the recording session was getting 10 bucks — the musicians would get 10 bucks, but the guy who brought him there was called the producer and he would get 10 bucks.

So Ike started rounding up other musicians and bringing them to recording sessions so he could be the producer. And then he found out that to publish music, you really just had to mail it to Washington and copyright it. So he became a publisher. Then he found out that in order to book a club, the booking agent basically called up the club and said, "I have this band, what dates do you have available?" So he opened his own booking agency. At one point he had over a hundred musicians working in different clubs through his booking agency.

> **"I didn't choose rock photography. It just kind of happened."**

There's a whole side of Ike that people don't know about, because people don't know anything about Ike except what Tina said. In her second book, I think she's a bit more open about the actual relationship.

GM: *You've mentioned that you could shoot very quickly, and that you didn't place a lot of emphasis on composing shots. How did you manage to pull that off before there was autofocus?*
BG: I was never really good at focus in the first place. (laughs) I had to move kind of fast. John and Yoko used to make fun, because a lot of my pictures are soft focus. At one point they even mentioned it, and I brought in a contact print to show them that a lot of my pictures are actually sharp and clear and in focus, but the ones they like are the ones that are slightly soft because they carry more emotion and possibly because it's the right moment. I didn't have time to finish focusing, but I had to get the right moment. And those pictures tend to be the better ones.

The automatic functions just made shooting a lot easier. And in fact, at one point, I think it was with the Olympus there was a spot meter, like a light meter, built into the camera. Before that, light metering was always a separate thing. You had to find the exposure with the meter and then set the camera. The Olympus was the first one to build a spot meter into the camera. It just made things a lot easier. At one point, after using that for a while, I went and bought a Leica — I think it was an M3, and it was completely manual. It was so manual, in fact, it was like a camera from the 1940s.

GM: *You've mentioned Alice Cooper a few times. Did you do a lot of work with Alice?*
BG: Yeah, I like visual acts, and Alice was certainly a visual act. He acted out every song in a different way, he had several different costumes and props, and The Amazing Randi, who pretended to be the dentist and the executioner. Alice would get hung or he'd get his head cut off ... he was amazing. I got along with his management and Alice, we had a lot of fun together. They took me on the road a couple of times. The same thing with KISS. I got along with them really well, and I liked their manager Bill Aucoin. I actually met him before he met KISS, when he had a TV show out of Chicago.

A lot of my things are a result of being in the right place at the right time, and then meeting people. Then a year later or six months later, they end up somewhere else, and I'm already connected with them. It was interesting when Elton John came to a recording session with John Lennon, I already knew both of them. I'd known Elton for several years before I saw him with John, so it wasn't like a new experience. They both were friendly with me, you know? So it was very comfortable in that sense. So very often, I run into somebody that leads me to the next somebody.

GM: *Going back to KISS, didn't you do the thing with them coming out of the phone booth, them trying to be superheroes?*
BG: Yes. The funny thing, like I said, I knew Bill Aucoin from when he had a show. What the hell was it called? I'm forgetting. But Bill Aucoin had a TV show with Joyce Biawitz. They were partners from Chicago, and they had this TV show and they came to New York. They were filming record company presidents with their favorite act. I think they did Clive Davis with Patti Smith. And they did John Lennon with his favorite act, Yoko. So I was there when they were filming. That's when I met Joyce and Bill. A Year later, they came to Buddah Records with KISS. So I already knew them from that first meeting. So naturally, we got along pretty well. I was doing a lot of work for Buddah Records, so I actually took pictures of Neil Bogart when KISS signed their contract with Casablanca Records.

Now, most contract signees, there's a very simple picture. The president sitting at his desk, the band is standing next to him, they have a contract on the desk, usually there's a lawyer and a manager

BOB GRUEN

Gene Simmons, Ace Frehley, Paul Stanley and Peter Criss go into a city phone booth in their "street clothes" and come out in KISS gear. A playful Bob Gruen photo session with a Superman concept, taken in October 1974.

in the picture. When we did KISS, Neil Bogart actually put on some KISS-like makeup, and he had the contract handcuffed to his wrist. We did a very funny picture in the alleyway at the sound check for a show where KISS opened for Iggy Pop on New Year's Eve in 1973. That was the first time I met KISS. I remember taking pictures there, of the show, and it was a wild show. At one point, Gene's hair caught on fire because he had these new fire balls. He was throwing these things out in the audience that would catch fire in the air. But he held one too long and his hair caught on fire. Luckily, the roadie saw it quick enough that he put it out right away. So the next one, he threw it too fast, and it actually hit some kid in the face in the audience. The kid came backstage with a burned face and he didn't wanna leave. He didn't wanna go to the hospital. He loved KISS. He wanted to stay for the show. He had no problem with staying. "It was just a little burn, not a big deal." He was such a fan. So, I remember that night and I remember going backstage afterwards. Usually I would shoot the show and then go back to the dressing room and take pictures of the band with whoever's celebrities or friends would show up, or at least a record company executive.

And I remember standing at the door and Bill Aucoin saying, "We don't take pictures after the show. When the makeup comes off, the band is over, they only exist when they are in makeup. We don't take any pictures without makeup." And I said, "Great. I'm off early." I actually didn't know who Iggy Pop was at that point. So I left. I didn't even stay for the show. I ended up doing a lot of work with KISS, because again, they're very visual. And also, we got along, we're all New York guys. Gene Simmons is one of the funniest people you'll ever meet, besides being a total money maniac. But he does have a sense of humor, a New York sense of humor that just keeps you laughing all night. Ace [Frehley] is another very funny guy.

I got along with all four of them. and the thing was, *Creem* magazine came up with this idea of a photo novella, which is like a comic book made out of photographs. And the theme was that KISS discovered that there was gonna be a concert by a John Denver-like boring person, who they cleverly named John Cleveland. They felt that the world was coming to an end and it had to be saved by rock and roll. So they put up a whole bunch of posters around town for John Cleveland, and when everybody shows up, instead of John Cleveland, KISS comes out and saves the world, and they get a medal pinned on their chest, and then there's a big orgy in the dressing room. I just created the whole thing on the spur of the moment with no budget whatsoever.

It started out, they were in the subway reading the newspaper, and that's when they find out about this concert. They run into a phone booth like Superman, pull off their suits and ties, and then they run out as KISS. And the thing was, I didn't want them to run into themselves, that they run in and come out of the same phone booth. So I wanted to run into a phone booth and then go out in the other direction. And instead of me just turning around and going to the other side of the phone booth, we actually went to a different train station so I could get a different phone booth that went in that direction.

I'm just thinking now, I could have gone to the other side of the phone booth. But that's what we got, two great pictures, one where they're running in with the suits and another where they're running out as KISS. We went back up on the street to go back to the studio to change into their KISS outfits to do the second half of the pictures. And on the sidewalk, just spur of the moment, I said, "Hey, stand over there. Let's do a group shot." And we just took some pictures on the sidewalk there. And that ended up being in the comic book. We did the pictures in November, the magazine came out around January. They were in the studio recording their album. They loved the pictures, and they decided to name the album *Dressed to Kill* and they used the picture for the album cover. But the magazine came first.

It's one of the most well-known KISS pictures there is, and there are a lot of KISS pictures out there. And in fact, to this day kids go to Eighth Avenue and 23rd Street and stand on the corner and pretend they're KISS and take the picture. A short time ago they demolished the building that was in the background across the street, and they built some giant building in its place. So they changed the background. But I think on the album cover you don't really see that building anyway. I heard there was a fan site where the fans had proposed naming that corner KISS Korner. A lot of people were in favor of it.

Gene Simmons mentioned that KISS is the biggest band that ever came out of New York. KISS was not in the CBGB scene, they were never in the nightclub scene. They may have played a couple of clubs in Queens or Brooklyn, but never in Manhattan. They went right to theaters and then stadiums, they shot up really quickly, they're bigger than big. So, they are the biggest band that ever came out of New York.

GM: *You mentioned that you had taken Tina Turner around shopping for white bread. You were also very close with the Lennons. You seem to develop a relationship with a lot of these acts that you shoot. What do you attribute that to?*

BG: Well, like I said, when I was in high school, I was gravitated towards the theater, the art and music scene. And I've always lived with artists; it's just my lifestyle. So, I didn't come to this as a photojournalist observing a culture; it is my culture. I live here. I went to CBGB to see my friends, take pictures and try and pay the rent.

GM: *But you seemed to fit in very well with the people that you photographed. You were practically part of John and Yoko's family.*

BG: A lot of the musicians became friends. Not everybody. I'd go to a job and sometimes it was just a job. But a lot of times I would end up becoming friends with people because that's just the way we are. I can't explain how it happened, but a lot of people like me. I used to have a big birthday party and three or four hundred people would show up. Somebody once asked me why John Lennon or Joe Strummer or David Johansen had my phone number and would call me up. And I just said, "You'll have to ask them." I don't really know why people like me.

GM: *Weren't you in the recording studio with John Lennon, in the actual booth with him when he was recording "Woman Is the N****r of the World"?*

BG: Yeah. The first night I met him, we walked into the studio. I don't know why, but Yoko said that maybe he wanted to see how somebody would react. I met him in a hotel when we were doing an interview, and as the interview finished, because I was involved with the first book of rock

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Gruen's photo of John and Yoko in a tiny row boat in Greenwich, Connecticut, enjoying a rare escape from New York City (and FBI surveillance).

BOB GRUEN

photography called *The Photography of Rock*. The writer who did the biographies for the book liked me and my photos. After my interview, he said, "I'm interviewing John and Yoko next week because I'm doing a story about Elephant's Memory." John and Yoko were working with Elephant's Memory as a backup group and asked me to come and take the pictures. So I went and met him at a hotel where John and Yoko were doing the interviews.

They didn't want people in their apartment at that point. At the end of the interview, they were going to go down to the studio. And since the story was about Elephant's Memory, I asked if I could come along and get a picture of them together with Elephant's Memory, because I'd already taken pictures of Elephant's Memory separately during the previous weekend. But I said, "Can I get a picture of you and John together?" Yoko said, "You can come to the studio, but we won't pose until we're done working at the end of the night. And if you wanna wait around until then, you can take a picture." And I said, "Yeah, I can wait around." And she said, "You'll have to watch out for Phil Spector. He hates photographers!" So we went to the studio, and as we walked in, there's a driver and a guard and an assistant, and they walked towards the control booth.

John turned and motioned for me to follow him. I followed him into the studio room and right into a vocal singing booth, which is about a four-foot square, soundproof room. So he walked into the vocal booths, and they said, "OK, John, we're ready. Give us a level." He said, *one, two, three,* or whatever. They got a level, they put on the earphones, and he turned to me and said, "Be quiet!" I couldn't click the camera or anything. I'm just standing there. I don't know what's going on. And he starts singing, "Woman Is the N****r of the World."

It's a pretty powerful song, and I was just stunned. I was like, *really*? But I really liked the song. I had a very strong mother who was an attorney; my wife actually was also a pretty powerful woman. I like strong women, and I liked the sentiment of that song, and I really agreed with what he was saying. So I wasn't that shocked. I was just shocked in the sense that he would use the N-word and make his point so strongly. I was a little surprised that I was in the booth with him. You know, what the hell was I doing there? When he finished and I could speak, I said, "You're never gonna get airplay for this song."

And, of course, no radio station would play it. And what John did was he got a room that had like 200 answering machines that had a cassette tape. Each answering machine would play the song when someone called. The answering machines would answer the phone and instead of the phone message, it would play the song. They put out advertisements that basically said, "If you wanted to hear the new John Lennon song, call this phone number." If one number was busy, it would ring over to the next number. They literally had like 200 answering machines in a room, clicking from one number to the next. I never heard it on the radio until one day in Mexico. I was on a bus in the middle of the desert and heard the song on the radio.

GM: *That's crazy. What did you take away from that whole relationship with the Lennons? Did you learn something philosophical from them? Did it change your life in any way? I mean, you were very close. You witnessed things that nobody else did.*

BG: Well, John was very perceptive, very in the present. He was very funny. Almost everything he said had a pun on the end, and he would twist the words. And it was a laugh line. He just kept everybody laughing all the time. And yes, because he was so perceptive, I always felt I learned something. I always had a good time laughing. And one thing I really liked was that especially Yoko, with John, enjoyed eating well. They always had good food around. It almost became a joke, like, "Oh, Bob is here. Is it dinnertime?" Because I would tend to try to arrive around mealtime. (laughs)

GM: *I heard that that Yoko had taken you house shopping upstate with them?*

BG: Yes, I drove them to Connecticut when they were house shopping.

GM: *Were they trying to escape the city?*

BG: It's pretty well known that the FBI was following them and were trying to get John deported. The FBI was hanging out on the street on Bank Street. John and Yoko had an apartment where the door literally opened on the sidewalk, like three steps down off the sidewalk, and their door was right there. People started showing up when they started finding out where they lived. I was visiting one time when an assistant came in and said someone was at the door. John said, "Who is it?" The assistant says, "It's Jesus from Toronto." John says, "No, I don't know that one." It just got a little too public to be in an apartment where your door opens onto the sidewalk.

So they started looking for a house around January. I drove them up to Greenwich, Connecticut. By that time, my wife at the time, my first wife was their personal assistant, and they were

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 98]

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MIND GAM

John Lennon at Lou Adler's house, 1973.

YOKO ONO LENNON

ES REBORN

A New Look at John Lennon's Transitional 1973 Album

BY GILLIAN G. GAAR

As 1973 began, John Lennon was not in the best of moods. His most recent album, *Some Time in New York City* (1972), done in collaboration with his wife, Yoko Ono, had been a commercial and critical failure. With his immigration status unresolved, the threat of deportation from the U.S. hung over his head. And after five years of being together 24/7, the Lennon/Ono marriage was showing signs of strain.

This was the atmosphere in which Lennon recorded *Mind Games*, released in October of that year. It was an album even he didn't seem terribly enthused about, telling *Melody Maker* journalist Chris Charlesworth, "The only reason I make albums is because you're supposed to." But it didn't equal the excellence of *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band* or *Imagine*, neither was it as raw and unpolished as *Some Time in New York City*. If not quite a return to form, it seemed at least a step in the right direction.

And just after the 50th anniversary of its release, it's the next up in the series of reissues revamping Lennon's solo catalog. Like the sets for *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band* and *Imagine*, the deluxe *Mind Games* box offers various mixes of the album's songs; the standard Ultimate Mixes along with Elemental Mixes, Elements Mixes, Evolution Documentary Mixes, Raw Studio Mixes and numerous outtakes. (And for those wondering why a reissue of *Some Time in New York City* was skipped over, Simon Hilton, *Mind Games*' compilation producer and production manager, comments, "There's only one thing I can say to you about that — have patience.")

And the mixes (the Ultimate Mixes in particular) have given new life to an album that's been somewhat overlooked in the Lennon canon. "One of the things that I have thought is that this is like 'take two,'" says Rob Stevens, who did the Raw Studio Mixes of this latest reissue. "This is the second attempt to bring this album to the public. The public perception of John now is very different from what it was then, when he was embroiled in controversies that people either supported or did not. Now time has passed, and people can hear the album in a way I think is closer to how he intended it."

The lackluster response to *Some Time in New York City* seemed to sap Lennon's creative drive. The album's political broadsides — the songs addressed such topics as racism, the Northern Ireland conflict, the 1971 Attica prison riots, and what he saw as the unjust incarceration of activists Angela Davis and John Sinclair — hadn't won over many hearts and minds. It was his first album (aside from his three experimental albums released with Ono in 1968 and 1969) to miss the Top 40, limping to No. 48 in the U.S. *Rolling Stone* called it "the most disappointing album of 1972."

In a 1975 interview, Lennon conceded that his efforts to meld politics and rock and roll didn't always come off. "I was making an *effort* to reflect what was going on," he told journalist Pete Hamill. "Well, it doesn't work like that. It doesn't work as pop music or what I want to do. It just doesn't make sense. You get into that bit where you can't talk about trees, 'cause, y'know, y'gotta talk about corruption on 54th Street!"

As a result, Lennon backed off doing much of anything creative in early 1973. The first time he entered a studio was on March 13 in Los Angeles, when he turned up to provide piano and backing vocals on his song "I'm the Greatest," which he'd given to fellow Beatle Ringo Starr for his *Ringo* album. The session became a near-Beatles reunion, when George Harrison turned up to play guitar. Keyboardist Billy Preston and longtime friend and bassist Klaus Voormann were also at the session, and both suggested getting a new band together. Lennon demurred.

He next turned up at sessions for Ono's *Feeling the Space* album that June, adding guitar to "She Hits Back" and "Woman Power" and making a cameo vocal appearance on "Men, Men, Men." This flurry of activity on Ono's part (her double album *Approximately Infinite Universe* had been released earlier in the year) finally spurred Lennon into action.

"Yoko wanted to go into the studio to do a more complex album because she'd been writing some more complex songs," Hilton explains. "She wanted to diversify her repertoire a bit." Ono and drummer Jim Keltner, who'd appeared on *Imagine*, discussed which session musicians to bring in, eventually hiring David Spinozza (guitar), Gordon Edwards (bass), Ken Ascher (piano). Michael Brecker (saxophone), former Flying Burrito Brother "Sneaky Pete" Kleinow (pedal steel guitar) and the female vocal group Something Different.

"They were all doing the commercial circuit in New York and working on loads of jingles and TV ads and stuff together," says Hilton. "So they were all like old mates. John popped into a couple of those sessions, but was pretty much leaving Yoko to it. And he was really impressed with the caliber of the musicians. So soon as she'd finished, he was like, 'Right, I'm doing an album now!'"

And so, the day after mixing was completed on *Feeling the Space*, work began on *Mind Games* on August 1, at the same studio Ono had been using, the Record Plant, with the same musicians. The album marked the first time Lennon was credited as the sole producer. Ono received a credit for "Space," but apparently also served as an unofficial co-producer: "As evidenced by all of the tapes we listened to, she was there for all of the recording sessions and helping co-produce the album," Hilton says.

In contrast to some of his earlier recordings, Lennon worked quickly. Basic tracks were completed in just 10 days (in contrast, Hilton recalled listening to 96 takes of "Mother" while working on the *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band* reissue; "And my God, that's a way to spend a couple of days"). Both Hilton and Stevens attribute this to the quality of the musicians.

"The caliber of these musicians is so extraordinary," says Hilton, "and because John was a great ringleader and they were all very close friends, the band was really intuitive; they were used to playing sessions and giving each other space. I think they were really into getting the feel right with the musicians and capturing the magic in the studio."

"These were great players," says Stevens. "I mean, we're not talking good, we're talking great. John is a transcendent writer, singer and player, but in a different way than Spinozza's a player. Spinozza is a player who can play you a flatted fifth chord or whatever you want him to do, whereas John is much more instinctive and will make you feel something without really knowing exactly what he's doing when he's doing it."

While many of the *Mind Games* songs were written shortly before the sessions, the title track dated back to 1970. As Arthur Janov's book *The Primal Scream* had inspired the cathartic songs on *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band*, the book *Mind Games: The Guide to Inner Space*, by Robert Masters and Jean Houston, prompted Lennon to write a song he initially called "Make Love Not War." By the time he recorded a studio version of the number in 1973, he realized that was too cliched a phrase to use, hence the change to "Mind Games." Not that the final lyrics reflected the book's themes to any great degree. "The lyrics have nothing to do with the

John Lennon and Yoko Ono with cropped hair and matching outfits, 1973.

PENNY TWEEDIE/CORBIS/CORBIS VIA GETTY IMAGES

book except it's a mind game itself, the lyrics," Lennon explained. "The games are goin' on — so we can choose what kind of games we want to play or which side we want to play on. We are all playing them, whether we know it or not."

"It's really a magnificent piece," says Stevens. "If you went to a club and saw him with a guitar or a piano, and these four primary musicians, it would be a transcendent kind of experience, because it was the absolute best in terms of his thinking, his emoting, what he was thinking with his vocal. And these guys who were so simpatico, they were *locked*. They were just locked. They were having fun, so there were no inhibitions about getting locked."

"Rock and Roll People" was another song Lennon had first worked on in 1970, around the same time he recorded the home demo for "Mind Games." In the studio, it became a rollicking number that might well have given an additional boost of energy to the album, but it ended up being dropped. Johnny Winter would be the first to release a version of the song, when he recorded it for his 1974 album *John Dawson Winter*. Lennon's version wouldn't be released until 1986 on the *Menlove Ave* compilation (in a composite version compiled from takes six and seven).

As was common during his other recording sessions, Lennon and the musicians jammed on rock and roll classics between takes. The new set has an impromptu medley of "Matchbox," "That's All Right" and "Heartbreak Hotel," and at one point, while working their way through "Tight A$," Lennon shouts out "Scotty Moore!" in reference to Elvis Presley's first guitarist. "He's happy as a clam," Stevens observes. "He sounds comfortable."

Indeed, good spirits permeated the sessions throughout, as you can hear in the studio chatter in the session outtakes and Evolution Documentary mixes. "There's some great horseplay between John and the backing singers in some of the tracks," says Hilton. "They're obviously having a lot of fun together." "Tight A$" is a good illustration of that fun, as an up-tempo bit of wordplay, if a bit on the light side; Lennon later called it "a throwaway."

He was just as dismissive of other songs on the album, saying the love song "Out the Blue" was "nothin' special," and

John Lennon (during his "Lost Weekend" period), Harry Nilsson, Alice Cooper and Micky Dolenz celebrate an early Thanksgiving with singer Anne Murray (second from left) at the Troubadour on November 21, 1973, in Los Angeles.

RICHARD CREAMER/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

describing "Only People," a feel-good, we-are-all-one anthem, as "a failure of a song." Some may find these assessments overly harsh, but he does put his finger on the album's underlying weakness; too many of the songs feel uninspired, as if Lennon's simply going through motions. There's little of the passion found in songs like "Mother" from *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band*, *Imagine*'s title song or even "John Sinclair" from *Some Time in New York City*.

Of the stronger numbers, "Mind Games" would become recognized as one of Lennon's best compositions, a languid, dreamy song with Lennon seemingly backed by an lush orchestra (in reality, he was simply playing slide guitar). "Meat City" is another contender, a solid rocker depicting a city on the verge of the apocalypse ("People were dancin' like there's no tomorrow"), capped by an unexpected trip to China. And though he'd largely left sloganeering behind, "Bring on the Lucie (Freda Peeple)" was firmly in the anti-war camp, set to a boisterous musical backing.

There was a more puckish piece of political activism in the "Nutopian International Anthem," a track that was simply three seconds of silence. Nutopia was a "conceptual country" Lennon and Ono created in a playful bid to help his immigration case (Ono had received clearance to stay in the U.S. on March 23). In a press conference held on April 2, the couple described Nutopia as a country with "no land, no boundaries, no passports, only people," adding that, as ambassadors of Nutopia, they requested "diplomatic immunity." This wasn't forthcoming. But Lennon would eventually win his deportation case in 1975, finally receiving his green card for permanent residency the following year.

Mind Games was finished on Septem-

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ber 21 and released just over a month later in the U.S., reaching No. 9; the title track, released as a single, reached No. 18. The album earned gold certification for sales of half a million copies; better than sales for *Some Time in New York City*, but far short of *Imagine*'s sales of 2 million. And in contrast to his fellow Beatles, Lennon was bringing up the rear; both George Harrison's *Living in the Material World* and Paul McCartney's *Band on the Run* topped the charts that year, while Starr's *Ringo* just missed the top spot, peaking at No. 2. Even The Beatles' compilations *1962-1966* and *1967-1970* outperformed *Mind Games* on the albums chart.

The album received mixed reviews, though that was still an improvement in comparison with the negative reaction to *Some Time in New York City*. Nonetheless, Jon Landau was particularly harsh about *Mind Games* in *Rolling Stone*: "The album's music might have served as the basis for a good LP if it had been paired with some new lyrical insight and passion. But instead, Lennon has come up with his worst writing yet."

Robert Hilburn, a longtime Lennon fan at the *Los Angeles Times*, was more moderate in his review: "In many ways, *Mind Games* is a transitional album — a return to recordings by Lennon after the distractions and tensions of complex business problems with Apple Records and the particularly draining matter of his deportation struggle. There are, perhaps expectedly, some rough edges in this return, but more than enough rewarding ones to demonstrate that Lennon is still one of our most valuable artists, and to give us much reason for optimism over the next album."

Lennon agreed with the latter assessment, later observing, "*Mind Games* was to me like an interim record between being a manic political lunatic to back to being a musician again." By the time of the album's release, Lennon's life had entered a turbulent period. Over the summer, he'd begun an affair with May Pang, Lennon and Ono's assistant. After the *Mind Games* sessions were completed, he left with her for Los Angeles, where he began work on the ill-fated *Rock'n'Roll* album. The sessions quickly descended into chaos; after the third session, Jim Keltner and guitarist Jesse Ed Davis were enlisted to take a drunken, screaming Lennon back to his

JOHN LENNON
MIND GAMES (DELUXE EDITION)

Capitol/UMe (CD/DVD)

★★★★★

"It's just an album," was John Lennon's rather less than enthusiastic comment about *Mind Games* to *Melody Maker*'s Chris Charlesworth at the time of the record's release. "It's rock at different speeds … There's no deep message about it." But though *Mind Games* was never destined to be heralded as one of Lennon's best works, neither is it as insubstantial as Lennon portrayed it.

That's especially true of this latest reissue, which sonically leaves all previous reissues in the shade. There's a clarity and greater depth to the new Ultimate Mixes that makes you feel like you're listening to a different record, a great improvement over the muddy quality of the original mix. "I think John himself at that time felt the need to use production techniques that were used then, whether it was the orchestra, whether it was the reverb, whether it was background singers, whatever it was," says Rob Stevens, responsible for the set's Raw Mixes. "And I think if he was — and this is wildly hypothetical — if he was doing it now, I think he might have taken a simpler approach, letting the meaning of the record coming through far better than it did then."

Musically, it's an inconsistent album, more compelling in hindsight, perhaps, than at the time it came out. Lennon cited "Tight A$" as an early example of the Tex-Mex sound ("I don't think many people were doing it then"). "One Day (At a Time)" has him experimenting with falsetto, at the suggestion of his wife, Yoko Ono (and there's a surprising number of love songs about Ono on the album, considering that the couple was about to separate). If a song like "Aisumasen (I'm Sorry)" seems like a paler copy of "Jealous Guy," livelier numbers like "Bring on the Lucie (Freda Peeple)" and "Meat City" help pick up the slack.

As with the other recent Lennon reissues, the set's different mixes enable you to experience the music in different ways. "I think you sort of walk a tightrope of how creative can you get on these new mixes," says Paul Hicks, responsible for the Ultimate and Elemental mixes. "We really enjoyed turning off some elements to strip it back a bit. But the whole idea of doing the Ultimate Mix is to basically get a sonically improved version of what's there. So we were back and forth on how creative we were getting. And that's when we decided instead of compromising, to just do two mixes, the Ultimate and Elemental. Elemental is more like a stripped back, alternate mix, whereas Elements is literally just parts, just to showcase something."

You can best appreciate the differences by doing side-by-side comparisons. "Tight A$," for example, has an "unplugged" feeling in its Elemental Mix; the pedal steel guitar is the focus of the Elements Mix; you hear the song coming together in the Evolution Documentary Mix, from an early demo to studio rehearsals; and the intimacy of the Raw Studio Mix makes you feel the band is right there in the room with you. For this writer, after the Ultimate Mixes, the Raw Studio Mixes are the most interesting for that sense of intimacy, while the Evolution Documentary Mixes are like getting mini-histories of each song. Though since the latter features excerpts of, say, a home demo, you're left wondering what the complete version of the demo might sound like.

There's one outtake for every song on the album, as well as a surprising extra: an Evolution Documentary Mix of "I'm the Greatest," which Lennon wrote and eventually gave to Ringo Starr to record (though again, it makes you wish you could hear more of the home demo and later rehearsals).

The hardback book that comes with the set is excellent, featuring new interviews with all the performers, including the backing singers, Something Different, who weren't even credited on the initial release. And the set's two Blu-rays feature high-definition stereo, 5.1 Surround, and Dolby Atmos versions of all tracks (previous reissues only featured Surround and Dolby Atmos versions of the Ultimate Mixes).

A welcome upgrade that buffs up the reputation of this underappreciated album.

(A limited Super Deluxe Edition is already sold out; 2-CD and 2-LP versions are also available.)

— Gillian G. Gaar

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Eric Burdon & The Animals - Demos & Outtakes - from Ark & Before We Were So Rudely Interrupted
Canned Heat - Boston Tea Party - Boston, MA 6/29/70 - very good soundboard
Canned Heat - Woodstock 1969 - Bethel NY 8/16/69 - excellent soundboard 2017 remastered
Elvis Costello - Woodstock 1999 - Griffiss Park, Rome, NY - excellent soundboard
Counting Crows - Woodstock 1999 - Griffiss Park, Rome, NY - excellent soundboard
Creed - Woodstock '99 - soundboard recording
CCR - High Tide - Johnny Cash Show 1968, Fillmore West 7/4/68, and Woodstock 8/17/69 - very good to excellent soundboards
Sheryl Crow - Woodstock 1999 - Friday 7/23/99 - excellent soundboard
Deep Purple - Purple Blood Runs Deep (2CD) - Hamburg, Germany 2/17/91 complete - excellent soundboard
Deep Purple - Slaves & Masters Tour 1991 (2CD) - Sao Paulo, Brazil 8/21/91 complete - excellent soundboard
Deep Purple - Western Springs (2CD) - Auckland NZ 12/2/84 - excellent audience recording
Doors - Minneapolis Concert Hall - 11/10/68 - very good audience recording
Doors - Moonlight Drive - unreleased rarities
Bob Dylan - Genuine Basement Tapes, Volumes 1 - 5 (5CD) - Saugerties, NY 1967 - studio outtakes - may be ordered separately
Grateful Dead - New Years Eve 87/88 I - Oakland CA 12/31/87 - excellent soundboard
Grateful Dead - Woodstock '69 - Yasgur's Farm 8/16/69 - excellent soundboard
Green Day - Having A Blast - Woodstock 8/14/94 - excellent soundboard
Greta Van Fleet - Lincoln Hall - Chicago 11/30/17 - excellent soundboard
George Harrison - Through All Those Years - unreleased Harrisongs
Jimi Hendrix - Woodstock (2 CD) - 8/18/69 plus Shokan, NY 8/14/69 and Dick Cavett Show 9/9/69 - excellent soundboards
Jimi Hendrix - Woodstock Rehearsals - Jimi's house in Shokan, NY 8/14/69 - excellent soundboard
Jefferson Airplane - The Woodstock Experience (2CD) - Bethel, NY 8/16/69 - complete performance - excellent soundboard
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Led Zeppelin - Sparking J.H.B. (3CD) - Fort Worth TX 3/3/75 - excellent soundboard
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Tom Petty - Irving Plaza (2CD) - NYC 4/12/99 complete - excellent soundboard
Pink Floyd - A Night In Italy (2CD) - Torino, Italy 9/13/94 - excellent audience recording
Elvis Presley - Cut Me & I Bleed - humorous and risque recordings - excellent soundboards
Elvis Presley - Keep Following That Dream - the complete studio session 7/2/61
Elvis Presley - Let Yourself Go! - outtakes & rehearsal for "Elvis" (The '68 Comeback Special)
Elvis Presley - The Unissued Elvis 1956-1958 (2CD) - unreleased studio takes
Paul Rodgers & New Friends - A Tribute To Woodstock - Saugerties NY 8/14/94 plus Cologne, Germany 2/3/94 - excellent soundboards - friends include Slash, Mick Ralphs, Neal Schon, Simon Kirke, and Jason Bonham
Rolling Stones - Complete Woodstock Rehearsal Tapes (4CD) - Bearsville Studios May 1978 - excellent soundboards
Rolling Stones - In Woodstock - 1978 US tour rehearsals - Bearsville Studio, Woodstock, NY May-June 1978 - excellent soundboards
Springsteen - The Homecoming (2CD) - Red Bank NJ 10/11/75 - excellent soundboard
Ten Years After - Woodstock - Bethel NY 8/17/69 - excellent soundboardTraffic - Woodstock 1994 - Saugerties, NY 8/14/94 - excellent soundboard
The Who - Woodstock 1969 Deluxe Edition (3 discs) - Sunday 8/17/69 - excellent soundboard PLUS DVD of same performance and a DVD of the Tommy TV Show on German TV 1969
Neil Young - Catalyst Tapes Volume Three - Santa Cruz, CA 2/7/84 first set - excellent soundboard

RARITIES ON DVD

Canned Heat - The Alan Wilson Years 1967-70 - Woodstock + TV appearances - pro-shot
Deep Purple - The Early Days - Playboy After Dark 10/23/68, Belgium 8/22/69, Captain Beyond at Montreux 4/30/72, Tommy Bolin TV documentary - excellent pro-shot TV & film footage
KISS - The Return Of KISS - Largo, MD 7/8/79 (16 songs) + Tomorrow show & Dynasty promo ad - pro-shot
KISS - Unmasked Down Under - Sydney, Australia 11/22/80 - pro-shot
Led Zeppelin - Live Aid And More - Live Aid 7/13/85, Sydney 2/27/72, 1972-73 tour documentary, Montreaux 1971 - pro-shot
Manfred Mann - Collection 1963-69 (2DVD) - 45 rare pro-shot TV and film clips
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Page & Plant - Utamaro - Tokyo 2/13/96 - pro-shot
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Pink Floyd - Wish You Were In Moscow - USSR June 3-5, 1989 - excellent audience recording
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Plasmatics - Chainsaws, Shotguns And Rock 'n' Roll (2DVD) - The Life Of Wendy O. Williams - TV clips 1979-90
Poco - You Better Think Twice - TV & live collection 1970-82 - pro-shot
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Elvis Presley - The Private Tapes 1974-77 - Omaha 7/1/74, Vegas 8/19/74, 8/18/75, 8/19/75, Pittsburg 12/31/76, Kansas City 6/18/77
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Prince - LoveSexy Live - Dortmund, Germany 9/9/88 - pro-shot
Prince And The Revolution - Syracuse - Syracuse, NY 3/30/85 - pro-shot
Suzi Quatro - Live In Japan . . . And Elsewhere (2DVD) - Japan 1975, Praha 1979, Polonia 1980, East Germany 1979 - pro-shot film
Queen - Pavillion de Paris - Paris, France 3/1/79 - pro-shot
Rare Earth - In Concert 1973-75 - Midnight Special 1973, Cal Jam 1974, DKRC 1974 & 1975 - TV clips
Raspberries - TV Rarities - 21 songs
Lou Reed - Ghost Stories - Paris, France 5/25/74 + 1/29/72 + Barcelona, Spain 12/10/84 - all pro-shot
Sly And The Family Stone - My Own Beliefs (2DVD) - video anthology 1968-86 - all pro-shot
Unreleased Woodstock Outtakes - CSNY, John Sebastian, BST, Arlo Guthrie, Janis Joplin, Sly Stone, CCR, The Who - very good to excellent film, video, and 8mm footage

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John and Yoko in California.

temporary home at producer Lou Adler's mansion in Bel Air. When the sessions eventually fell apart, Lennon spent 1974 working on *Walls and Bridges*; *Rock'n'Roll* would finally be completed in early 1975, around the time Lennon and Ono reconciled. There would be no new original album until 1980's *Double Fantasy*.

Over the years, *Mind Games* has been reissued numerous times on vinyl and CD. The 2002 reissue featured a remixed version; the 2010 release featured a new remaster of the original mix. The most recent reissues of Lennon's catalog have raised the bar once again.

In speaking of the original *Mind Games* release, Hilton says, "I think something definitely happened in the mixing of that album, because it's very much up in the kind of top end of things, almost like it had been mixed for tinny car speakers from the 1970s. I think it's been often overlooked because of the sound quality. I think something strange happened in the mixing process that messed up this album and weakened it, and so people thought that the songs were weaker as a result. A lot of what we've managed to do here is actually bring the songs and John's voice to the front, and you start realizing that the songs are actually much stronger than previously thought."

The book that accompanies the Deluxe and Super Deluxe sets (which is different from the separate *Mind Games* book set to be released this September from Thames and Hudson) provides plenty of background information with comprehensive interviews, some of which also played a role in shaping the sound of the reissue. "We talked to Keltner about the drum sound, and we ended up remodeling that ever so slightly according to Jim's specifications," says Hilton. "When I asked Jim, 'Can I play you some tracks?' he was like 'Yeah, sure man, I've got about an hour. Is that OK?' And I was like, 'Yeah, that's fine. That's all we'll need.' Eight hours later, all day I've been playing him songs and he's like, 'Just play me some more, man, this is so cool! I'm right back in the sessions, you know?' And I did that with every single one of the musicians, and they all got such a big kick out of it. Doing those interviews was some of the best days of my life."

For Stevens, *Mind Games* shows Lennon again exploring new directions, with the new reissue allowing the production team to present the album in a better light. "On *Plastic Ono Band*, there's a lot of Phil Spector influence," he says. "There's a lot of slapback. It was raw, that's true. But that was where John was at, at the time; he'd had it with ultra-produced *Sgt. Pepper's* and the like. And he was making visceral statements that were almost frightening. And then on *Imagine* he realized, 'Well, if I want to communicate, I've got to tone it down a little bit.' So he and Yoko, and, to a lesser degree, Phil, walked that fine line. On *Mind Games*, it seems to me — and this is hypothetical — he was experimenting. And so what you get is a different hybrid, and one that slants more towards a fuller, more fully produced record that perhaps at the time left the artist slightly behind. And I think that follows the pattern of him obfuscating his own vocals most of the time in recording sessions. But he came closer to surfacing here, and now I think we've been allowed by Yoko and Sean [Lennon, the couple's son] — and they are the powers that be — to reveal things in all their glory."

When Robert Hilburn, in an interview that ran in the *LA Times* on December 30, 1973, asked Lennon about what he wanted for the future, he replied, "The ability to create whatever it is I want to create. Just that and the fact I want to be with Yoko until I die." Whatever ambivalence Lennon might have had about *Mind Games*, there was always the promise of the creativity that lay ahead to look forward to.

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[GRUEN'S WORLD | FROM PAGE 86]

looking for a house either on Long Island or Greenwich or Connecticut around there. And her parents lived in Greenwich and got a real estate agent that was gonna show them around. So John and Yoko had a station wagon, and I drove them to Connecticut in it. There's a nice picture of John Yoko in a rowboat, a couple of pictures, a little series of them. John looked very happy and Yoko was kind of nervous. It was a little pond, but she didn't wanna get dumped in it. I remember afterwards on the way back, we stopped at a Howard Johnson's and got a snack and some coffee and stuff. They treated us really nice, and then at the end, they all got excited and came over and asked for autographs. And they gave us little plastic HoJo cups, which I kept for years.

A symbolic Gruen piece called "Guitar in the Gutter."

GM: *You've got a photo called "Guitar in the Gutter."*
BG: Yes. That was outside of Max's Kansas City. And to me, that was my anti-war statement. I just felt the destruction of it could be such fun. You know, when you see a musical instrument, you think of how much fun people have with it, and how much communication people have with music. And when you see that guitar totally smashed and ruined, it is just a statement of destruction to me. I consider it kind of an anti-war, anti-violence statement. You know, not many people see that picture.

GM: *Are there any artists that you wish you had shot, that you never did shoot?*
BG: Otis Redding, actually. I've gotten that question before, and yes, I was a huge, huge fan of Otis Redding. And I was always hoping I could meet him and photograph him, but he passed away before I got there. And I once met Jimi Hendrix. The day I made a big print of the Tina Turner picture, I came downtown from the lab. I came out of the subway in Sheridan Square, and I saw Jimi Hendrix walking across Sheridan Square, down Christopher Street. And I kind of followed him down Christopher, he was in the direction of my house, and he went into a restaurant. We used to have a soul food restaurant called Pink Teacup. That was a fantastic soul food restaurant. It's really awkward to just interrupt somebody, especially if they're sitting down to eat, you know? And finally, I took the picture out of the envelope and I went over and said, "Excuse me, Jimi. I wanna show you this picture." He looked at it and said, "That's a really good picture." I said, "Well, I'd like to take your picture some time." He told me we'd meet again, but unfortunately he died about a month or so later.

GM: *Who was the most challenging artist you've worked with?*
BG: I don't know. I don't really think like that because every job to me is a challenge, and the more of a challenge it is, the more exciting it is because if I accomplish it, it's a bigger accomplishment. When I get something really hard done, I really feel good about it. So I don't feel like it was hard. I feel it was a challenge that I overcame, you know? So I don't look back and think, *well, that was a drag* or *that was bad*. I mean, there's one guy that I could say was the biggest challenge, but I won't because he's the biggest, and I won't give him publicity. But there was one guy who was bigger than anybody else. (laughs)

GM: *Did your career ever have a negative impact on your life? Did it cause any personal issues?*
BG: Well, in a sense that, yeah, I was out all the time. I had to break up my first marriage. My wife wanted to move out of the city, and there was no way I could do that. We had a young son, and I didn't really grow up with him. We have a fantastic relationship now. My ex-wife always kept me in touch with my son. There was always an extra bed in his room, and I visited often, but I didn't live with him. And I think that was a result of my constant career, you know, that I was out all the time. I was traveling all the time. It wasn't really conducive to a family life.

GM: *Sure, the balance between doing what you did and family, and the toll it can take, is certainly a sad but common tale. One of the things I've learned in my research is that you're quite a philanthropist. Tell me about that.*
BG: Well, in my own way, yes. I like to contribute and give back, but I don't really have money. But I can donate photos and get other people to donate money for those photos. And I do that whenever I can. For any decent organization that's really trying to help people, I try to chip in what I can.

GM: *Is there any one specific charity that you like to work with?*
BG: Well, there's several. One that I really like called Her Justice, which is a large group of lawyers who do pro bono work for victims of domestic violence. And there's another organization called Why Hunger? which not only distributes food, but teaches people how to cook and eat more nutritious meals for themselves and be able to get things on their own. They have huge food pantries where they give out a lot of food, and I like to support them. There's a number of different cancer and medicine charities that I like to support when I can.

BOB GRUEN

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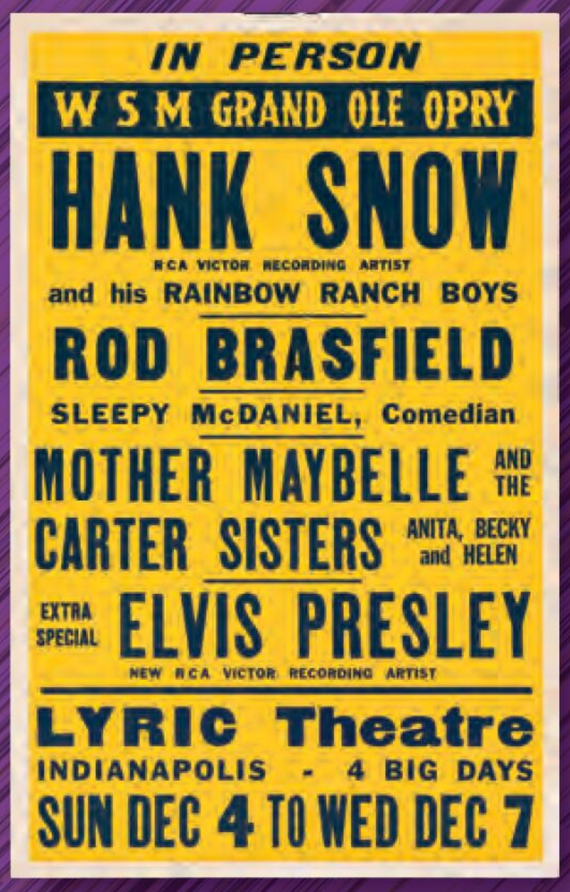

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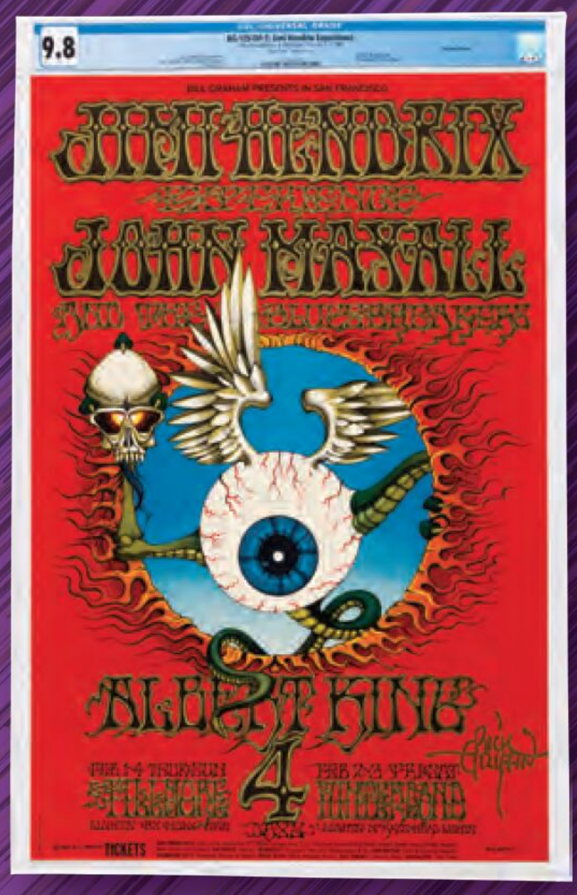

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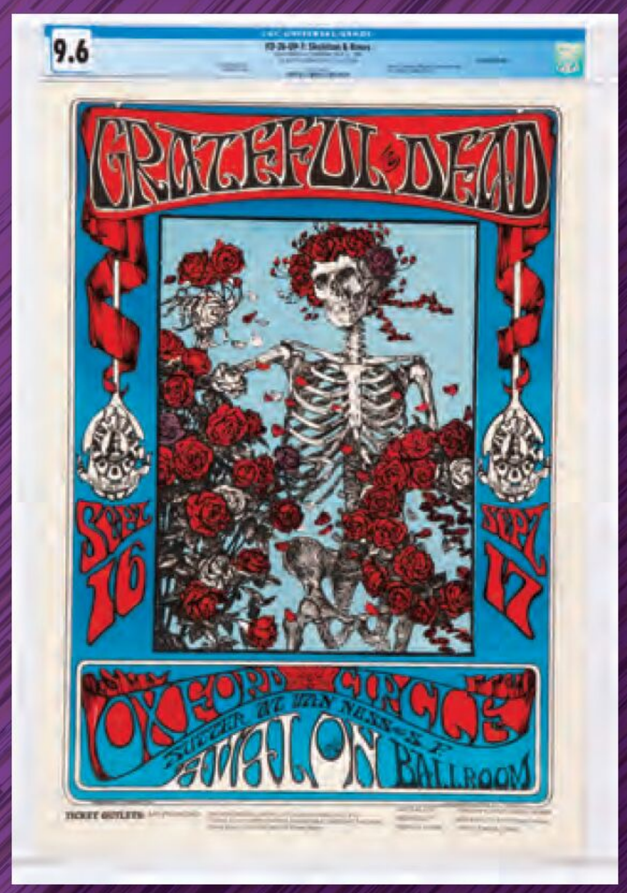

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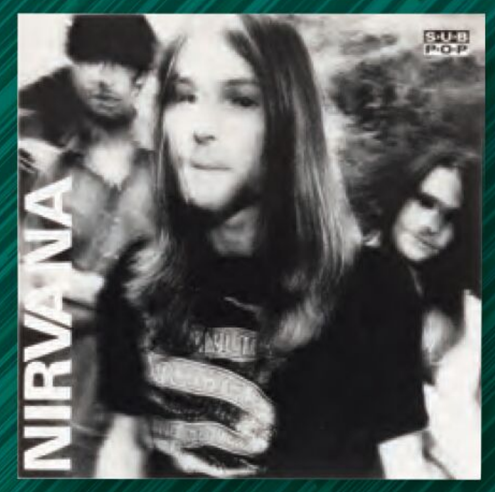

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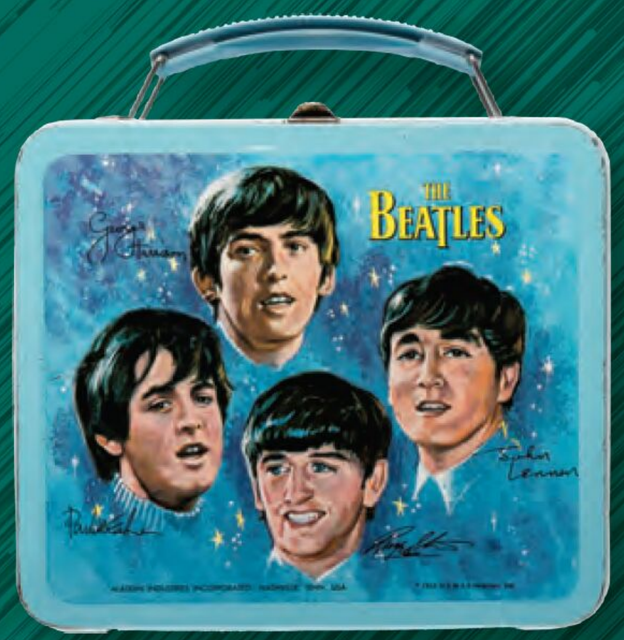

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